

Maps and Monsters in Medieval England



Asa Simon Mittman

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Asa Simon Mittman

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For Michele—

My world has more than enough monsters, but only one angel.

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Introduction

Medieval English Manuscripts, Maps and Monsters: A User's Guide

The first folio of an Anglo-Saxon manuscript of Isidore's popular *De Fide* opens with a penned initial 'S' composed of two figures.¹ (Fig. 1) The top curve of the letter is formed by a tonsured monk holding a cross-staff, who gestures to his eye with the long fingers of his oversized hand, his gaze fixed on the text he helps to form. The momentum of his body, emphasized by a line running along his back from his head to his feet, carries him forward, tumbling, toward his text. The untowered figure below gestures with an



Figure 1. London, British Library, Royal 6. B.viii, f. 1v, Human Initial, Isidore's *De Fide*. (By permission of the British Library.)

open hand toward the script. With a swathe of his robe, he holds a book—likely this manuscript. The lower figure swirls upward, again in the direction of the text block. For the elite, educated Anglo-Saxon viewer, the message would have been clear: “Look closely!” the top figure silently shouts; “at this!” adds his companion.

This image, like many others produced in Anglo-Saxon England, aims to teach the reader how to read both texts and images. These processes, unlike our modern approaches to reading, involved a slow, meditative ingestion and rumination in order to draw out various levels of meaning in the text.² Drawing on the Kosher laws in Leviticus for a metaphor, this process is described by many medieval authors as *ruminatio*, that is rumination, literally chewing over and over as a cow does with her cud.³ The Venerable Bede, an inexhaustible source of observations about early medieval England, uses the same metaphor in his account of the first poet of the English vernacular. The illiterate cowherd Cædmon, having seen a miraculous vision, produced his *Hymn*. He is then presented with “the course of sacred history” in order that he may produce further poetry: “He turned all which he was able to learn by listening and memorizing—just like a clean animal chewing its cud—into the sweetest song.”⁴ This metaphor, more resonant in an agrarian culture than in our own, not only implies careful consideration, but also suggests the inherent indigestibility of the unprocessed text or image. In this climate, works were designed to sustain the inevitable *ruminatio*. Hence, any text or image that yields all its meaning after a cursory first glance would likely have been considered inadequate.

The value of close reading was not only conveyed by images of pious clergymen. The metaphor of *ruminatio* was also enacted through images of monsters, which are found throughout the period gnawing on the texts they help to form. The violent, gnashing beasts of the fabulous Junius Psalter, for example, frequently lash out with sharp fangs at the sacred text before them.⁵ (Fig. 2) Since the Book of Psalms was the very centerpiece of monastic devotion and contemplation, these monsters, these literal embodiments of rumination, are not as out of place as they might first seem.

The present viewer is thus required to associate these monsters, living in the margins of the text, with the pious monks by whom they were painted. If this at first might seem incongruous, or even improper, a brief comparison of the beast from the Junius Psalter and the monastic figure from the manuscript of Isidore's *De Fide* reveals their close functional and formal affinities. Both lunge forward, swirling toward their texts. Both stare with large eyes at the letters before them. And, beyond these compositional similarities, both are bent and distorted, their bodies twisted to form the first letters of their texts.



Figure 2. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 27, f. 34v, Monstrous Initial, the Junius Psalter. (By permission of the Bodleian Library, the University of Oxford.)

Whereas the monk may encourage us to pay close attention with a milder air, the fang-toothed, bug-eyed monster nonetheless serves as an exhortation of sorts, driving us with its own furious energy toward the psalm before it.

Why were manuscripts worth such attention to medieval readers and, by implication, why are they now worth such close attention by art historians? The *Liber scintillarum*, a florilegium collected by Defensor which was

translated into Old English and circulated throughout England, contains a passage by Isidore—the same versatile seventh-century encyclopedist and theologian who penned the *De Fide*—that informs us that “he who wishes to be with God eternally ought to pray frequently and to read frequently; for when we pray we speak with God, but when we read God speaks with us.”⁶ In a monastic context, a life focused solely and intently on God, reading manuscripts was a primary means of access to the spiritual world and, at least in this passage, takes precedence over individual prayer. A bilingual Anglo-Saxon manuscript of *The Rule of Saint Benedict*, written in the tenth century, tells its readers:

But for those who would rush to the perfection of the way of life, there are the teachings of the Holy Fathers, the observance of which leads a man to the height of perfection. For what page or what speech of the divinely authored books of the Old and New Testaments is not a most lawful rule for human life? Or what book of the Holy Catholic Fathers does not echo how we may come by a straight path to our Creator?⁷

This passage is provided in the original Latin and followed by an Old English translation, in order that the instructions not be misunderstood.⁸ Although Benedict does not mention images in this passage, elsewhere in his *Rule*, he discusses the virtues of the “labor of the hands,” and makes allowances for craftsmen to practice their trades, as long as they may remain humble while doing so.⁹ These brief yet meaningful comments can enable us to understand the production of innumerable illuminated manuscripts, created within an ascetic monastic context for a hyper-consciously contemplative audience. They were vital sites of connection between an earthbound reader and his heavenly aspirations, and as such could command nearly limitless attention by their creators and readers. They now serve as rewarding sites for the extended contemplation of modern viewers wishing to understand the works that now stand before them.

Who were the Anglo-Saxons who created and consumed the medieval books under discussion? In their writings from Bede onward, the Anglo-Saxons represent themselves as Roman Christians. However, it must be noted that they were living, writing and creating a culture far from Rome and Jerusalem, the sites that would have been considered most sacred and important to their spiritual well-being. This self-imposed exile from all that was central to Christian belief caused an anxiety to arise about their place on the earth, which was in turn viewed as a reflection of their place within God’s divine plan. This may account for the unusually high number of world

maps—indeed, maps of any and all kinds—surviving from medieval England. These maps, like our own modern maps, reveal more about their creators than they do about the regions they cover. They therefore command—and would have received—extended rumination.

Although medieval England may well have been a period “notable more for its discontinuities” than its cohesion, there are a few cultural threads that run throughout the period, binding it together even if only loosely.¹⁰ These ideas appear in both the art and literature of the Anglo-Saxons and Anglo-Normans, and I will treat these forms of cultural expression together, as they were produced and experienced. Several of the images to be discussed appear in manuscripts also containing relevant poetic texts, the most notable being London, British Library, Cotton Vitellius A.xv, which contains an illuminated encyclopedia of monstrous races known as the *Marvels of the East* as well as the only surviving medieval copy of *Beowulf*, which pits its eponymous hero against the terrifying, homophagic Grendel and his monstrous mother.¹¹ These works were seen as sufficiently interconnected to bind them together in a single manuscript; both then and now, a reading of one helps to inform a reading of the other.

Of course, much of the art produced in this period was explicitly Christian, with doctrinal and didactic emphases on Gospels and Psalters, on images of Christ and the saints.¹² But what are we to make of the many images that are not overtly or even indirectly devotional? How can we come to terms with the overwhelming array of monsters that lurk at the edges of images and often force their way into the center? These monsters, half-human hybrids and bristling dragons were just as essential as images of God and his heavenly hosts for the medieval viewer, whose universal spectrum was broad enough to contain at one end holy perfection and at the other the most wretched and abject, the vile and the absolutely evil. Medieval English viewers would likely have located themselves somewhere between these two extremes, and the lower end of the scale was no less important than the higher end in this process of identity formation. Many cultural groups have sought to define themselves through “an ongoing process of *dependent* differentiation,” establishing themselves in relation to their Others, but for the Anglo-Saxons, this “definition by means of difference” was particularly crucial.¹³ In this way, as Michael Camille argues, “the centre is . . . dependent upon the margins for its continued existence.”¹⁴

The Anglo-Saxons had many genuine Others with which to compare themselves—the painted Picts to the north, the Celts to the west and of course, the Vikings and Danes, who periodically landed unannounced for plunder or trade. When the Normans arrived, this remained the case.

Nonetheless, living in self-perceived exile from Continental Europe, these groups were compelled to surround themselves with images of even more disparate Others, monsters that, through their extreme outlandishness, cast their creators as paragons of normality. For the sake of this study, I wish to define “monster” broadly. This term seems, often, to be used as a catch-all phrase which stands in for “everything else.” Once proper people, plants, animals, divine and demonic beings have been accounted for, what remains are the oddities of creation, which I would describe as the monsters. They are often the in-between (such as half-human hybrids) or somewhat magical (fire-breathing or dream-controlling), beings somehow, in some way outside of the ordinary. I will expand on these issues and definitions throughout.¹⁵

In the chapters which follow, I examine a number of images appearing in a variety of contexts. Part One deals with medieval maps and geographical texts. These works, and the monsters they contain, not only reflected Anglo-Saxon views; they also helped to shape them. Part Two focuses on the semi-human, composite monstrous races of the *Marvels of the East*. These wondrous beings were called into existence in order to provide a basis of comparison through which their creators might exercise and exorcize their anxieties about their identities as Anglo-Saxons and as human beings. Part Three covers monster-inhabited initials, concentrating on the fluidity of the boundary separating men from beasts.

PROBLEMS OF SOURCES AND HISTORICAL DEFINITION

Vast amounts of material culture have been lost from the medieval period. C. R. Dodwell enumerates art’s many enemies, medieval and modern: grave robbers, fire, reconstruction of churches, reclaiming of precious metals and gems, tithings and Danegelds, raiders, and so on.¹⁶ Anglo-Saxon themselves often wrote about these losses.¹⁷ So much has been lost to the caprices of time and nature that Dodwell rightly raises the possibility that “we have [no works] that the Anglo-Saxons themselves would have considered impressive from the later and longer Christian period.”¹⁸ George Henderson acknowledges that the volume of loss makes the rules of production, consumption and interpretation difficult to define in this period.¹⁹ On account of the great losses, I have cast a wider net than the traditional historical boundaries might allow. Strictly speaking, the Anglo-Saxon period begins with the entrance of the Angles, Saxons and Jutes into England, some time in the fifth century and ends on October Fourteenth, 1066, at the moment Harold is killed. The initial boundary is uncertain, since all accounts were written much later and the endpoint, while extremely precise in its chronology, still

does not provide the sort of closure we might desire. Although the crown had passed hands, it has been widely acknowledged that Insular culture was slow to react. Archeological, stylistic, linguistic, ecclesiastical and political history all show surprising continuity in the century or two following 1066.²⁰

On account of the many continuities, and the great losses, I believe that it is not merely helpful but indeed necessary for a study of this sort, which seeks to understand broad cultural notions, to examine all available evidence at its disposal in order to gain a more complete understanding of the complex works of art and literature under consideration. Certain themes were of enduring importance, relevant in the sixth century when Gildas wrote his *De excidio Britonum* (*The Fall of Britain*) and still relevant seven centuries later when of Richard of Haldingham created the Hereford *Mappa-mundi*.²¹ The discussion which follows will be primarily focused on the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries. This period begins with the era of the Benedictine reform, which was accompanied by an increase in manuscript production, and carries through the years following the Conquest. I will make two chronological exceptions: I will look ahead to the thirteenth century's efflorescence of great world maps—which I will present as the outgrowth of a centuries-old tradition of geographical thought—and I will gaze back to select texts and images created in the early Anglo-Saxon or Insular period, but housed, copied, read and appreciated throughout the centuries under discussion. By reaching across the boundaries traditionally separating Early from High and Anglo-Saxon from Anglo-Norman, we may gain a clearer understanding of the issues of marginality and monstrosity—issues which are themselves frequently characterized by a refusal to obey just such rules and boundaries.

Part One

Mapping the Outer Edges of the World

Chapter One

Mythical Origins

Far beyond the reach of medieval English travelers, on the other side of the Mediterranean and across the great Nile River, lurked a dazzling array of malformed men and hybrid monsters. For the medieval English, the headless giants, fire-breathing dog men and shape-shifters of “the East” were not mere fairytale fantasies, nor were they simply rhetorical devices, metaphors for evil and sin. Rather, they were flesh and blood beings, reported and illustrated in scientific sources, even though they were located at too great a remove to be personally verified. However, before we can arrive on these distant shores, we must begin by standing where the creators and viewers of such images stood, in England.

Although the documented history of England is long, its initial moments are nonetheless obscure, related in a series of myths contained in the earliest historical texts. These tales, natural and supernatural, were fundamental components in the Anglo-Saxons’ process of identity formation and are intimately connected to their perception of their own geographical and chronological setting. As Hugh MacDougall notes:

Myths of origin enable people to locate themselves in time and space. They offer an explanation of the unknown and hallowed traditions by linking them to heroic events and personages of the distant past. In addition, they form the ground for belief systems or ideologies which, providing a moral validation for attitudes and activities, bind men together into a society.¹

The earliest moments of Anglo-Saxon history, occurring sometime in the largely undocumented fifth century, do not seem to have been recorded until the middle of the sixth century. These events were debated among Anglo-

Saxon and later medieval English authors, who record a number of differing tales.

The Welsh monk Gildas provides the earliest British account in his *De excidio Britonum* (*The Fall of Britain*), from around 550. In this “fierce denunciation of the rulers and churchmen of his day,”² he writes, “they called in those most ferocious, abominable Saxons, hated by God and men . . . Nothing more pernicious, nothing more bitter has yet come to be.”³ This execration is followed by the tale of the coming of the *tribus cyulis*, the “three keels” that were to become deeply embedded in Anglo-Saxon mythology.⁴ They appear next in the gentler *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* (*Ecclesiastical History of the English People*), where the Venerable Bede tells us, “then the race of the Angles or Saxons . . . came to Britain in three long ships . . . They came from three strong German nations, that is the Saxons, the Angles, the Jutes.”⁵ Bede also adds two men named Hengest and Horsa, the Old English words for “stallion” and “horse,” as leaders of the Angles and Saxons.⁶ In addition to functioning as military leaders, they also came to be considered progenitors of much of the ‘English’ race. According to the *Historia Brittonum*—a text compiled around 800 and assigned in the eleventh century to ‘Nennius’ or ‘Ninnius’—the royal house of Kent began with Hengest.⁷

While Hengest provided the Kentish Anglo-Saxons with their originator, along with all the Anglo-Saxon royal families, his lineage was traced to Woden, the one-eyed chieftain of the Norse pantheon.⁸ The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, generally a fairly terse and unadorned account of history, year by year, contains all these legends; the three ships, Hengest and Horsa and Woden all feature in the prologue.⁹ To this mythology, the *Historia Brittonum* adds a few accounts of Britain’s first occupation after the Flood, one of which tells of “the detested Brutus,” who traces his lineage through the Roman god Jupiter to Ham, the wicked son of Noah who laughed at his father’s nakedness and whose line was henceforth cursed.¹⁰

Elsewhere, the compiler of the *Historia Brittonum* traces the origins of the British through the same Brutus, who is in turn traced back to Javan, son of Japheth. This would not be worthy of note here, were it not for the mention of Japheth’s other son, Magog.¹¹ Through this account, the evil children of Gog and Magog—who are said in Revelation to be released at the end of the world to destroy civilization—are not-too-distant cousins of the British.¹² Geoffrey of Monmouth’s twelfth-century *Historia regum Britannie* (*History of the Kings of Britain*), provides a variation on this myth, in which a now singular Gogmagog is the most fearsome occupant of Britain, “which was inhabited by no one except a few giants.”¹³ For the Anglo-Saxon author of the *Maxims II*, contained in an eleventh-century manuscript, these giants

continued to live in the marshes of Britain: "The giant shall inhabit the fens, lonely within the land."¹⁴ Gerald of Wales, with his characteristic elaboration, enhances the giant-conquest within an account of the early occupation of Ireland, writing that Bartholanus and his followers took over Ireland and, after three hundred years, had increased their numbers to nine thousand. Bartholanus then "gained victory over the giants in a great war," but shortly thereafter, "he and nearly all his descendants died of a sudden pestilence, perhaps owing to a strong corruption of the air, the result of the cadavers of the giants that had been slaughtered."¹⁵

There are a few important ideas I would like to trace through all these accounts. First, the later the sources, the more information we find about the earliest moments of Anglo-Saxon history. Gildas, our first source, provides very little information in his account of the arrival of the Saxons. Bede expands this, and the *Historia Brittonum* and the *Chronicle* each adds more, so that by 1188, when Geoffrey of Monmouth writes his account, it is quite rich in detail. Moving forward through history, we see the creation and embellishment of myths. Tracing backward, we find ourselves holding an onion. The story has many rich layers, each larger than the preceding, but all surrounding an ultimately empty core.

In each of these texts we gain a sense of displacement, of exile. According to the *Historia Brittonum*, the three boats had been "driven out from Germany into exile."¹⁶ 'Nennius' also provides a passage which hints at the negative consequences of this *Volkerwanderung*: "And Hengest always invited boats little by little to him, so that the islands from which they had come were forsaken without inhabitants."¹⁷ The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* carries a further note of disquiet about the emigration from the Continent: "From Angle, which thereafter stood a waste between the Jutes and the Saxons, came the East Angles, the Middle Angles, the Mercians, and all the Northumbrians."¹⁸ Of course, these are four noble Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, and yet there is a sense of loss in the notion that their ancestral homeland has remained a wasteland.

In the various accounts, we can trace a theme of cultural permeability, of hybridity. Bede achieves this gracefully, uniting the Angles, Saxons and Jutes into the Anglo-Saxons simply by declaring that Vortigern invited "the race of the Angles or Saxons," even though he acknowledges that "they came from three strong German nations, that is the Saxons, the Angles, the Jutes."¹⁹ This new group, not identical to any of the continental societies from which its constituent parts descend, then blends with both the native Britons and the even more remote Romans, forming a multilayered society that modern archeology is still attempting to disentangle.²⁰ Perhaps the most

tangible result of this melding of cultures and traditions is the written form of Old English, the Anglo-Saxons' vernacular language. Old English was originally written in Germanic runes, but after the conversion to Christianity the Latin alphabet came into use. Still, because a few Old English sounds were not available in the Latin character set, Anglo-Saxon authors reintroduced a few runic characters (i.e. æ, ð and þ, known as ash, eth and thorn), producing in the end a written language as deeply hybrid as the culture that produced it.

Finally, and for my purposes most importantly, all these myths contain some sort of animalistic or monstrous element. For Gildas, the Anglo-Saxons are "wild beasts."²¹ Their enemies are likewise "wild barbarian beasts . . .

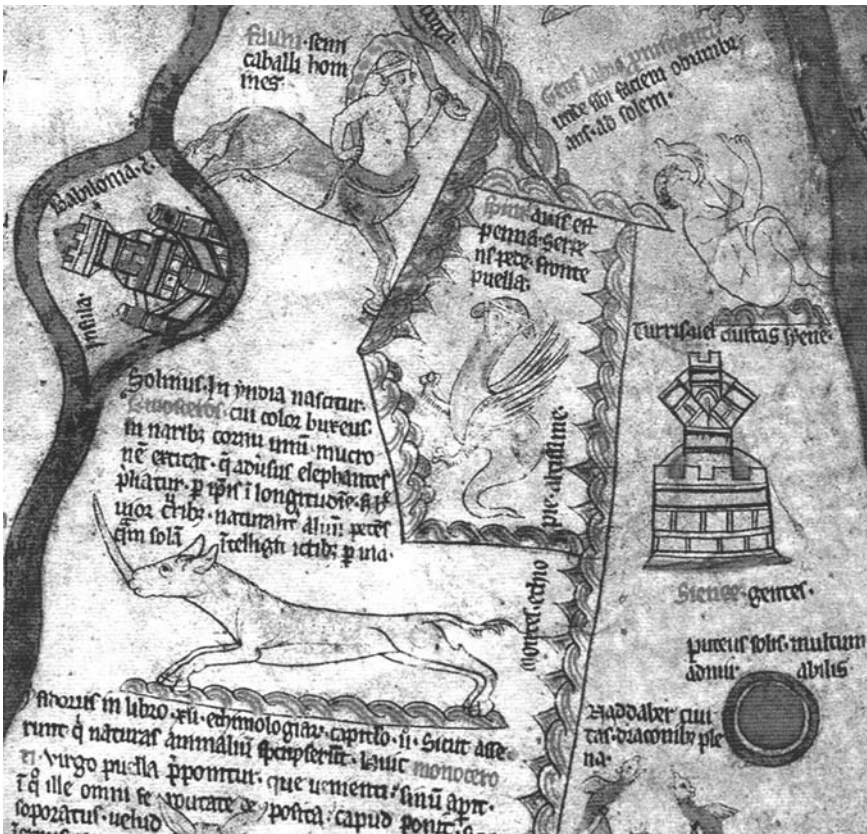


Figure 1.1. Hereford World Map, Detail of Fauni and Straw Drinkers. (By permission of the Dean and Chapter of Hereford and the Hereford Mappa Mundi Trust.)

filthy hordes of Scots and Picts, just like dark troops of worms which emerge from their tight holes, their little hollows, when Titan [the sun] is high and they grow hot in the warmth.”²² For ‘Nennius,’ the genealogies of the Britons and Anglo-Saxons are all tied in with Gog and Magog and the accounts of Geoffrey of Monmouth and Gerald of Wales are filled with giants that need to be killed in order for Britain to be re-inhabited. Even the noble Hengest and Horsa, that is “Stallion” and “Horse”—the founders of Anglo-Saxon England—are as much horses as men, evoking images of centaurs or *fauni*, such as we find on the Hereford map. (Fig. 1.1) According to Robert Hanning:

The origin story is an artistic device employed to explain how a nation, a family, or an institution came into existence. At the same time, it is more than merely mock-history. Implicit in the account of an important beginning (important, that is, for the teller and his audience) are the ideals which underlie the author’s view of life or which he feels should animate the institution about which he is writing.²³

The Anglo-Saxons used these origin stories to explain their existence and to justify their presence in England, but at the same time these myths betray cultural anxieties that revolve around monstrosity and hybridity. Over thirteen-hundred years after Gildas wrote his *De excidio Britonum*, British anthropologist Frederic William Farrar published an article describing the ‘aptitudes’ and origins of various human races. He notes that “it is a very remarkable fact that every race, including even some of the semi-barbarous, tell us, in their far-reaching traditions, of other races who preceded them, and whom they found occupying the countries to which they came.”²⁴ This has certainly been the case with the Anglo-Saxons, whose own myths receive brief mention by Farrar in a list of such ‘far-reaching traditions’ that informs us: “Britain was once occupied by cannibal savages who were ousted by the Kelt, and who appear in various early traditions as ghosts or giants.”²⁵

Farrar, who believes himself to be far removed from the ‘semi-barbarous’ groups he discusses, dismisses the notion of ghosts and giants but is perfectly willing to affirm the presence of ‘cannibal savages’ in Britain prior to the Celtic immigrations. In this manner, he follows a long tradition of reducing the Other’s grotesque physique to a grotesque culture. When Christopher Columbus landed in the Caribbean, for example, to his surprise he found the local people to be beautiful and well-matched to European standards of proportion. They could therefore no longer be considered the

literal monsters they were purported to be, but rumors of cannibalism rapidly spread to fill this gap.²⁶

MAPPING THE WORLD IN TEXTS AND IMAGES

What is the foundation of this monstrosity? Why have the Anglo-Saxons and later English authors rooted their own culture in monstrosity? Jeffery Cohen writes that giants were always located “at civilization’s periphery.”²⁷ In reference to the description of the fens as the lonely abode of giants, Hrafnhildur Bodvarsdottir writes, “this passage [from *Maxims II*] stresses not only the presence of a monster in the marshland but also the uncivilized aspect of the monster.”²⁸ Geographical location and biological habitat impacted the perceived degree of civilization of the inhabitants. For the Anglo-Saxons, as for many other cultures, self-definition was deeply embedded in geographical location. Roger Bacon, the thirteenth-century English writer, quoted the late classical Neoplatonist philosopher Porphyry, writing that “place is the beginning of our origin, just as a father.”²⁹ We have already observed that the Anglo-Saxon’s self-defined fathers are a frightful lot of giants, pagan gods and animals. If Bacon was correct, we should expect to find the Anglo-Saxon view of England’s location equally diabolical. In reality, that which separated the Anglo-Saxons from the rest of Europe, indeed from the rest of the known world, was nothing more than the English Channel. To modern observers consulting the standard Mercator Projection world map of the sort hung on our classroom walls as children, this distance seems rather trifling. (Fig. 1.2) The overall location of the British Isles similarly seems ordinary or, if remarkable, only for its centrality to the world, located more or less in the center of the landmass-filled Northern Hemisphere. These maps no doubt provided my elementary school classes with our own origin-story, suggesting that the great United States was founded by the English, who came from that small but central island, in the middle of the map. But this is not how the world was described for medieval observers. Gildas provides a detailed passage on the location of Britain:

Britain is an island almost in the outermost band of the orbit of the earth’s circuit, and toward the west, as it is said, well-poised in the scales which balance the whole earth, inclining from the south-west [or Africa] and stretching to the north pole, of eight-hundred miles in length and two-hundred in width . . . surrounded by a ring of ocean, maintaining, it is said, an uncrossable circuit on all sides except for the zone to the south, where one can sail to Belgian Gaul.³⁰

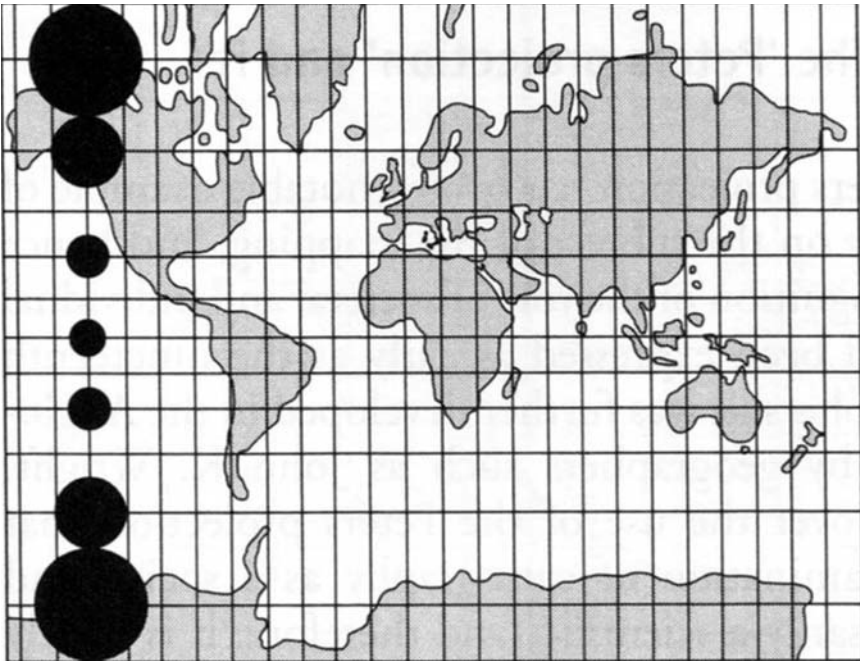


Figure 1.2. Mercator Projection World Map and Proportional Analysis. (By permission of Daniel Dorling and David Fairbairn, *Mapping: Ways of Representing the World*, Pearson Education Limited.)

In his account of the size and shape of Britain, Gildas borrows from Orosius, and seems to have established a convention that was to be repeated by Bede, the *Historia Brittonum*, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, Geoffrey of Monmouth and Gerald of Wales, among others.³¹ More interesting, however, is his account of Britain's location. Orosius simply informs us that Britain is "an island in the ocean, extending a long way to the north."³² It is Gildas, then, who thrusts Britain to the ends of the earth, and cuts it off from the Continent. He is, perhaps, following Virgil, who was also quoted by Isidore of Seville half a century later as writing that "the Britons are entirely divided from all the orb of the world."³³ Isidore adds to this, writing that "Britain is an island of the ocean divided from the orb of the world by the sea flowing between them."³⁴ Bede follows Gildas, writing that Britain "lies almost under the north pole of the world."³⁵ The dedicatory page of the Codex Amiatinus, produced at Monkwearmouth and Jarrow during Bede's life reflects this perspective, addressed from "Ceolfrið, dedicating his Bible to the pope, though he lived in a remote place."³⁶

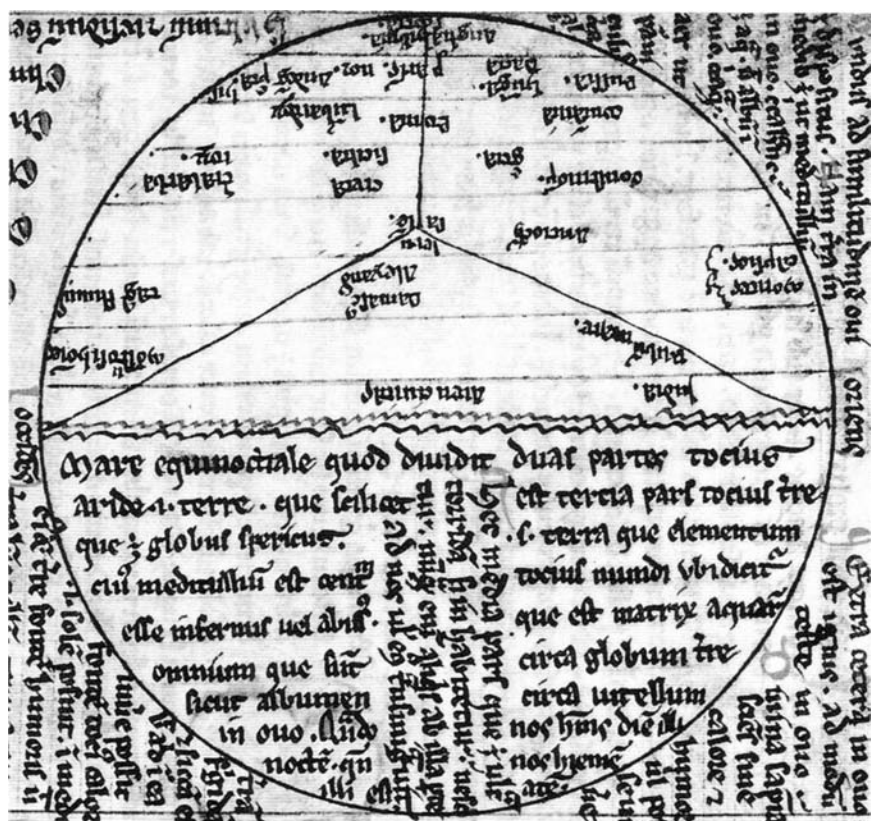


Figure 1.3. London, British Library, Cotton Julius D.vii, f. 46r, John of Wallingford Map. (By permission of the British Library.)

In John of Wallingford's climatic map of the thirteenth century, this English tradition of self-banishment to the world's margin is kept very much alive.³⁷ (Fig. 1.3) On this folio, amid an array of notes on geography and cosmology, is a circular diagram of the world with the northern hemisphere distinctly separated from the southern by a band of waves. The text in the northern hemisphere is oriented in such a manner that, in order to read it properly, we must place north at the bottom. At the center of the inhabited world is Jerusalem (a convention to be discussed at length below). Following the line drawn from Jerusalem to the North Pole, we find crammed in at the very base of the map *Anglia*, *Hybernia* and *Scottia*. They are, as Bede describes them, just "under the north pole." Indeed, on this map John of Wallingford has extended the usual seven climatic zones to eight, providing a new, northernmost frigid zone for the British Isles, alone.³⁸

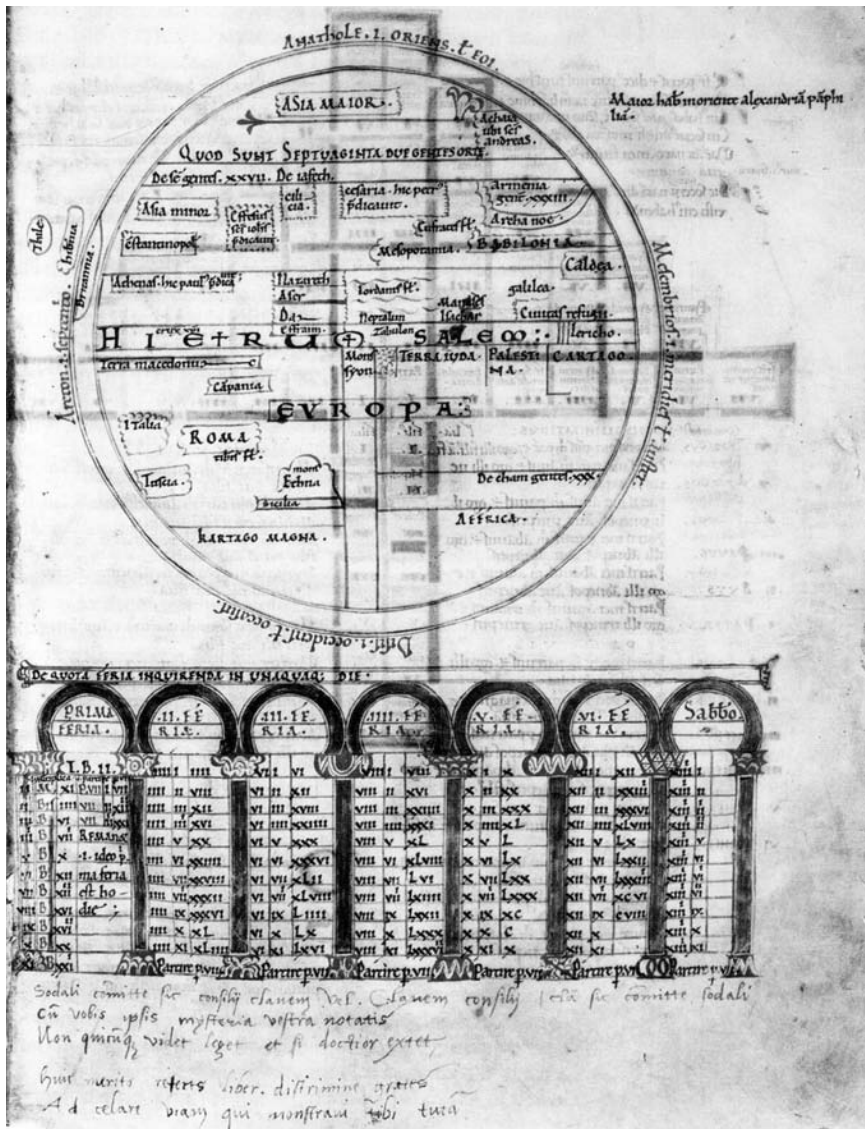


Figure 1.4. Oxford, St. John's College Library 17, f. 6r, T-O Map. (By permission of the President and Scholars of Saint John Baptist College in the University of Oxford.)

These islands were not only considered to be northward, but more generally removed from civilization as well. At the Synod of Whitby, as Bede informs us, the British Isles were referred to by the priest Wilfrid as “the two

most remote islands of the ocean.”³⁹ Cummian, an Irish monk sent to Rome in 630 to attempt to resolve the question of the date of Easter, wrote to the abbot of Iona that he found that Greeks, Scythians and Hebrews all celebrated a date different from that of “a handful of the British and Scots who are almost at the outermost extreme, so that I might call them pimples on the sphere of the earth.”⁴⁰ Here, it is the people of the islands, not just the landmasses, who are considered far removed. In a twelfth-century map contained with other miscellaneous material at the front of an English *Computus* manuscript, the marginalization of the British Isles reaches new heights. (Fig. 1.4) Here, *Britannia* actually lies within the double-lined border which marks the rim of the world. *Hybernia* and the semi-mythical island of *Thule* (variously identified as the Shetlands, Iceland or Norway) are drawn outside this rim, literally beyond the pale. They are the only regions to receive this treatment and in comparison with genuinely remote places like Africa and

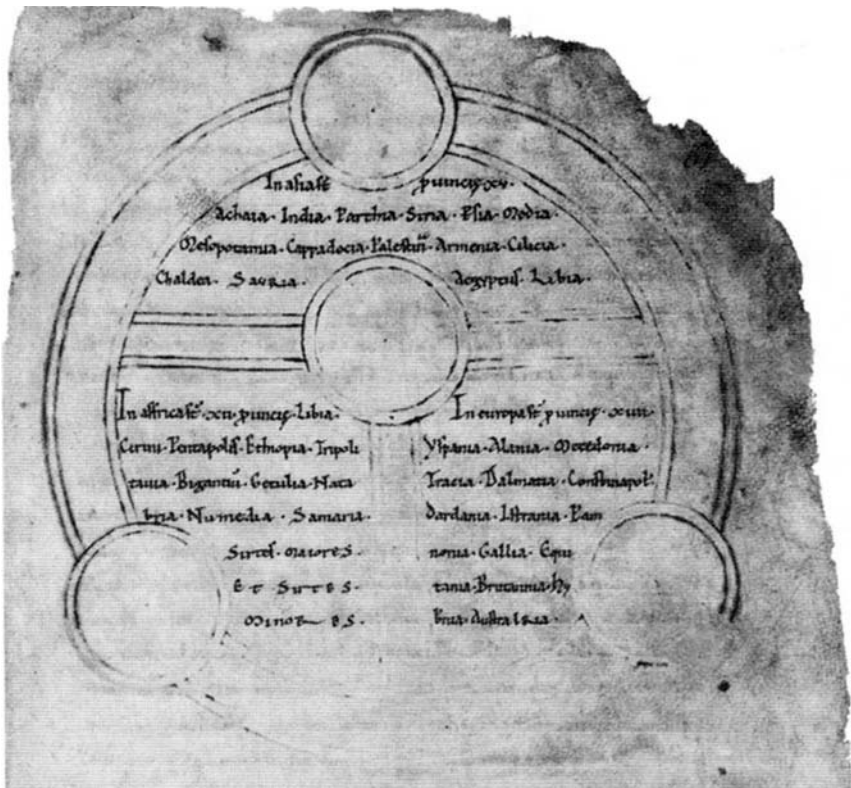


Figure 1.5. London, British Library, Cotton Vitellius A.xii, f. 64r, T-O Map. (By permission of the British Library.)

Asia, they seem—like the giants dwelling in the fens—to be forcefully excluded from the bounds of civilization. These notions are even reflected in a simple T-O list map in a tenth-century Anglo-Saxon manuscript of Isidore's *De natura rerum*, which for a time was “patriotically reattributed to Gildas.”⁴¹ (Fig. 1.5) Here, the three continents of Asia, Africa and Europe are neatly delineated by the ruled lines of the ‘T.’ The continents are filled with lists of countries, and, in the context established above, it seems more than chance that *Brittania* and *Hybernia* are situated as the last two lands in Europe, with the exception of the seemingly misplaced ‘*Australia*,’ or ‘Southern Land.’ Even in this simple, textual format, the British Isles have been shunted to the end of the list and, by implication, to the ends of the earth. Evelyn Edson points out an “oddity” in this map; Europe and Africa have been reversed.⁴² This may bear significance, as the T-O format was often connected to the body of Christ. From at least the ninth century, onward, “the idea of the T as a crucifix superimposed on the spherical earth, symbolizing its salvation by Christ’s sacrifice,” was common.⁴³ This idea was dramatically represented on the two of the great *mappaemundi*, or world maps: Hereford and Ebstorf. Hereford is capped with an image of Christ in judgment. (Fig. 1.6) He raises his hands to display the stigmata, the signs of the suffering he undertook to redeem mankind. Following the usual configuration, to Christ’s right we find the souls of the saved being led upward by an angel into the gates of Heaven while, to Christ’s left, we find the damned, ensnared in a ring of rope by a pair of devils who pull them downward toward the toothy mouth of Hell. In case we are unsure of the fate of these



Figure 1.6. Hereford World Map, Detail of Judgment. (By permission of the Dean and Chapter of Hereford and the Hereford Mappa Mundi Trust.)

Christ's right we find Christian Europe and on his left, the monstrous races of Africa. On the Ebstorf map, Christ's left hand, with which he damns the souls of the wicked at the Last Judgment, bursts out of the midst of southern Africa, teeming with monstrous, possibly soulless races of men. (Fig. 1.7) The implications of salvation and damnation seem clear. On the right, where Christ's blessing hand is located, we would expect to find Britain. However, on the Ebstorf map, the British Isles have been shifted west, thrust almost under Christ's feet, far from the North Pole. Since the islands appear much farther north on most *mappaemundi*, it seems possible that the creator of the Ebstorf map has consciously driven Britain from the hand which brings salvation. What, then, has been implied in the text-filled Isidore map, in which Europe has been shifted to the traditional place of Africa? Has the English artist cast himself and his countrymen down Hell's eager gullet?

Even without this interpretation, these various geographical descriptions are laden with value judgments. In his *Topographia Cambriae* (*Description of Wales*), Gerald—with his usual self-aggrandizement—raises the question of whether such obscure locales merit the attention of his exquisite prose:

Some may object and, owing to different degrees of esteem, compare me to a painter, who with an abundance of costly colors—as if another Zeuxis excelling in his art—with such great skill and with such great cost is content to illustrate something worthless, some despised cottage in the country, where it was hoped with great expectation that he would paint a distinguished palace or temple, some canopy over a tomb. Indeed, they wonder that I am willing, among such great and distinguished material in the world, to adorn the boundaries of the world, the English, the Irish, certainly, the Welsh and the British, to extol them with letters and adorn them with the colors of rhetoric.⁴⁵

For Gerald, the British Isles function as a sort of global marginalia, serving to “adorn the boundaries of the world” with grotesque inhabitants, as images adorn the margins of his own manuscripts.⁴⁶ Throughout the Middle Ages from Gildas to Gerald, the occupants of Britain believed the British Isles to be located at the edge of civilization, a last, lonely outpost before the ‘uncrossable’ sea.

In small towns and smaller monasteries, the Anglo-Saxons were surrounded on all sides by the natural world. While modern, citified people may take occasional delight in heading ‘out into nature’ for diversion, the Anglo-Saxons described nature as uniformly grim, unfriendly and even

threatening.⁴⁷ In his discussion of the maps of Matthew Paris, Michael Gaudio amplifies this notion, writing that nature “was in every way held to be the antithesis of civilized Christian society.”⁴⁸ The Anglo-Saxons had good reason to be wary of nature which, even today still claims lives regularly. The half-glimpsed creatures, the shadows and natural whispers which still lend potency to the ghost-stories of campers, were condensed by the Anglo-Saxons into living beings. For them, the forests outside town and monastery walls were inhabited by monsters.⁴⁹ While this was generally viewed as a frightening situation, it also provided the perfect environment for “white martyrdom,” as St. Columba’s *Rule* refers to hermetic monasticism.⁵⁰ Bede describes the establishment of a monastery by Cedd as a fulfillment of Isaiah 35:7: “In the nest, in which first lived dragons, reeds and rushes may arise.”⁵¹ The Anglo-Saxons also found a new kind of hero in St. Guthlac, the hermetic warrior. He “made his home in a barrow, like Beowulf’s dragon, and lived, like Grendel, in a loathsome fen.”⁵² Guthlac, whom Eric John views as a conceptual link between Bede and Beowulf, was the leader of a group of bandits who, as a proto-Robin Hood, returned one-third of what he stole to his own victims; he then became monk and founded an austere monastery.⁵³ In the poetic *Guthlac A* text, the saint is described as a “faithful peace-guardian,” and as “one of the few who settled the borderland.”⁵⁴ Guthlac retreated into the fens—rightly considered by William Ian Miller to be a disgusting place full of the frightful, teeming matter of “thick, greasy life”—to enact his white martyrdom.⁵⁵ The Old English prose *Life of Saint Guthlac* provides a vivid description of this environment:

There is in Britain a fen of immense size that begins from Grante, not far from that city whose name is called Grantchester. There, there are vast swamps, in one spot dark standing waters and in another foul running streams, and there are also many islands and reeds and mounds and thickets of trees. With various windings, wandering and long, it continues through to the North Sea . . . When that holy man, Guthlac, heard these words, he immediately bade him to take him to that site, and he immediately did. He set out in a ship, and departed to traverse through that rough fen until he came to that place which is called Croyland. That land, in the middle of the wasteland, was reckoned to be situated in the aforesaid fen, exceedingly secret, and it was known to exceedingly few men, except for the one who took him there, because no man dwelt there before nor could any man live there before that blessed man, Guthlac, because there were accursed ghosts dwelling there.⁵⁶

In these fens, “primitive plant and primitive animal merge into slime, ooze, and murky quagmire . . . Rotting vegetation can be nearly as gorge raising as rotting flesh, and we are still wedded to folk beliefs that such vegetable muck spontaneously generates the worms, slugs, frogs, newts, mudpuppies, leeches, and eels we associate with it.”⁵⁷ It is in this environment that Guthlac is beset by an equally vile horde of demons:

Then, in the stillness of that night, it happened suddenly. A great host of wicked spirits came to that place, and they all filled that house with their coming. And they came in on all sides, from above and from below and from everywhere. They were dreadful in countenance and they had huge heads and a long neck and a lean face. They were foul and filthy in their beards, and they had shaggy ears, and crooked beaks and fierce eyes, and foul mouths. And their teeth were like walruses’ tusks, and their throats were filled with lies, and their voices were terrible. They had bent legs, and great knees and great behinds, and distorted toes, and hoarse screams in speech. And they came forward with immeasurable noise and with enormous dread, so that it seemed that all between heaven and earth rang with their dreadful voices.⁵⁸

The nature of the fens is such that these horrible, hybrid creatures do not seem out of place. Through Miller’s evocative language, Guthlac seems to become an Anglo-Saxon Swamp Thing, the eponymous hero of comic books and B-films. Composed of the very vegetation, the living muck of the swamp, he fights various demons external and internal.⁵⁹ As incarnated by Alan Moore, in his *Saga of the Swamp Thing*, the hero allows his body to become part of the swamp, sprouting tubers and ferns. Flowers bloom from his fingertips, and toads burrow in his side. He is at once the living embodiment of this repulsive environment, the monstrous Other, and the human hero battling the satanic forces of evil. While Guthlac does battle the demons that beset him, nonetheless, he is at one with the swamp, itself:

Indeed, not only the animals of the earth and air obeyed the commands of that man, but indeed, also the water and the air themselves obeyed the true servant of the true God.⁶⁰

Is hardly seems incidental that, in a panel from Moore’s *Saga*, the monstrous hero has his arm torn off by his adversary, as Grendel does.⁶¹ Through the Swamp Thing, Guthlac therefore may be connected back to the giants from the *Maxims* discussed above, as well as to the original fen-stalking man-

monster himself: Grendel, the account of whose home reads like a description of Guthlac's fen, as well as the Swamp Thing's water-filled body:

. . . It is not far from here,
 measured in miles, that the mere stands;
 Over it hang groves, covered with frost.
 The wood, with fixed roots, overshadows the water.
 . . . None living is so wise,
 among the children of men, that he knows the bottom.
 Although the hounds harassed the heath-stepper,
 the strong-horned stag would seek the forest,
 put to flight from far off, would rather give up his life
 on the bank than be willing
 to protect his head [in the mere]. That is not a pleasant place!⁶²

Seamus Heaney, in his recent translation of *Beowulf* even refers to Grendel's mother as "that swamp-thing from hell."⁶³ He is here translating the compound *grund-wyrgenne*, a phrase translated by others as "water-wolf," "wolf of the deep" and "accursed female of the deep."⁶⁴ And yet, *grund* primarily signifies not "water," but "bottom," "foundation," "abyss," and even "hell."⁶⁵ This same term is applied to the swampy mere where the two monsters live, and so I would agree with Heaney's inspired use of "swamp-thing" to describe the creatures which dwell within its unplumbed depths.⁶⁶

The edges of civilization, the liminal zones of forest and fen, were spaces in which monster and miracle not only seemed more plausible, but deeply linked, on occasion merging together in the telling and retelling of tales. Indeed, by 1400, the saintly, fiend-battling Guthlac had become conflated in romance with Sir Gowther, "a rapacious murderer born of a demon, raised as a giant," but nonetheless revered as a saint.⁶⁷ Indeed, it is through figures like Guthlac and Cedd that the edges of civilization, and of the world, become powerful sites for salvation. Such saints were at once linked with and violently opposed to their liminal locales. These contested battle-grounds provided ideal locations for them to continually test their saintly mettle.

Chapter Two

Mapping Identity

For Michael Gaudio, once a map is constructed, “quite literally, the page becomes a landscape with its own spatial politics, and upon it a hierarchy of meaning is constructed, with nature at the bottom and the word of God at the top.”¹ In dealing with such images, it is imperative that we do not confuse them with modern maps, or failed versions thereof. Medieval mapmaking was by no means “a primitive version of our own,” but rather, “a positive form of organizing space in a world in which signs are not tied to their referents and meanings are never final.”² In 1965, G. R. Crone sought to move beyond the traditional prejudices against medieval maps, summarizing past literature on the topic with a quotation by Sir Cyril Beazley, who wrote of the “monstrosities of Hereford and Ebstorf.”³ At the outset of her text on medieval maps, Natalia Lozovsky compares medieval geography to the Ugly Duckling, writing that “it often gets scolded and cannot find a place of its own, all because people almost invariably misunderstand its true nature.”⁴ This notion is already less current than it was when her book went to print in 2000, thanks to a number of excellent publications on the subject. However, Lozovsky’s chosen metaphor reinforces the same two assumptions that she is trying to combat; first, medieval cartography is ugly, and second, it has yet to develop into its proper form. I would rather assert that, like most cultural products, medieval maps suited their own purposes, just as they were. Though some modern scholars remain blind to the aesthetic power of these works, their original audience must have found them worthy of their high cost.

Maps are not now, nor have they ever been, neutral representations of the natural world. Even the most modern maps, based on satellite photography, are the result of a number of decisions by their creators regarding all aspects of their final appearance from color and line to scale and orientation. Some of these elements are more obviously ideological than others; the vast majority of maps produced in the western tradition still place the northern

countries in a literally superior position, even though our scientific understanding of the universe renders this an arbitrary decision. As Evelyn Edson argues, “maps are not natural, self-evident ‘statements of geographical fact produced by neutral technologies,’” as had been claimed by Matthew Edney.⁵ Rather, “the hand of the mapmaker is guided by a mind located in a certain time and place and sharing inevitably the prejudices of his or her surroundings.”⁶ This ought not to be read as a condemnation. Instead, it should liberate maps from the impossible burden of conveying geographical ‘Truth,’ thereby permitting them a fuller range of goals.

We believe that we use maps primarily for ‘practical’ purposes; they help us navigate our roads and oceans. But maps are also frequently found nailed to the walls of elementary school classrooms where they are not intended to help the children to find their way home, never mind to Madagascar or Antarctica. Likewise, medieval English maps were generally produced for purposes other than navigation. Only the most recent publications on medieval maps have been able to overcome the ‘failure’ of such works to meet modern notions of accuracy, even though geographical accuracy was not relevant for the needs of their original viewers. Indeed, as Denis Wood asserts, no maps are truly accurate: “Does the map merely . . . reproduce reality? If it does, everything on the map is real. If it doesn’t, nothing is.”⁷ The only truly accurate map would be that described in Argentine poet, essayist and short story writer Jorge Luis Borges’s “Of Exactitude in Science.” Here, in the interests of ‘exactitude,’ a map is expanded to cover the entire region it describes.⁸ Even modern maps present ideas, not actualities. On most maps, for example, the Mississippi is a clear, blue stream, not a silted-up track of free-flowing mud.⁹ Is this any more ‘accurate,’ any less an active construction of mythology than the Red Sea which is painted red on the Hereford *Mappamundi* and other medieval maps? (Fig. 2.1) In this regard, “the map is constitutive of a certain form of reality, not merely a representation of it.”¹⁰

If quantitative further proof is needed to suggest that accuracy was not the goal of all medieval maps, we may turn to J. B. Harley and David Woodward, who argue that the overwhelming majority of the surviving maps produced throughout the entire Middle Ages, from the eighth through the fifteenth century, were basic T-O maps that were never supplanted as ‘superior,’ more detailed representations of the earth emerged.¹¹ Wood argues that, even today, accuracy ought not to be the single ambition of cartographers:

It is not precision that is at stake, but precision in respect to what? What is the significance of getting the area of a state to a square millimeter when we can’t count its population? Who cares if we can fix the location of Trump’s Taj Mahal with centimeter accuracy when what would be



Figure 2.1. Hereford World Map. (By permission of the Dean and Chapter of Hereford and the Hereford Mappa Mundi Trust.)

interesting would be the dollar value of the flows from the communities in which its profits originate? . . . The accuracy is not in doubt, just . . . *not an issue*.¹²

If medieval maps, particularly English maps, are not simply crude and incompetent attempts to produce the *Michelin Guide* on vellum, what are

they? John Friedman considers them “an expression of contemporary cosmology and theology [rather] than an object of utility.”¹³ Certainly the Hereford *Mappamundi*, at five-foot-two-inches high, or the lost Ebstorf *Mappamundi* (which survives in a full-scale reproduction), at a full ten-feet-square, were not intended as roadmaps to aid in travel. Today, as Denis Wood points out, most maps are afforded a “casual taken-for-granted quality,” with hundreds of thousands of maps carelessly buried in countless glove boxes and kitchen drawers.¹⁴ Our map culture is radically different from medieval map culture, particularly early medieval map culture.

A common modern definition of ‘map’ would no doubt refer to an ‘accurate’ two-dimensional representation of the world, or some portion of it. Harvey would like to redefine maps as “graphic representations that facilitate a spatial understanding of things, concepts, conditions, processes, or events in the human world.”¹⁵ He continues: “Cartography is nothing if not a perspective on the world.”¹⁶ Naomi Reed Klein furthers this notion by connecting medieval maps with *rotae*, “flat, circular wheels that made understandable, in a simplified graphic manner, concepts that explained the way the world worked.”¹⁷ Many critics of medieval maps have become snagged on the thorny issue of accuracy, with occasionally surprising results. W. R. Tobler adopted what remains perhaps the most original approach to the problem of accuracy in his discussion of the Hereford map, arguing against ‘common sense’ that the map is actually quite accurate. Through series of mathematical formulas and point-to-point comparisons between the Hereford map and the earth, he attempts to prove that it is not merely somewhat accurate, but actually is ninety-five percent accurate, deviating from the real world we all instantly recognize in modern maps by a mere five percent.¹⁸ This proof relies on the notion that, while all two-dimensional maps must make use of some sort of map projection, “there can be no such thing as a ‘correct shape’ on a map projection.”¹⁹ As Mark Monmonier states in *How to Lie with Maps*, flat maps inherently distort shapes and distances. Only globes can be accurate: “Not only is it easy to lie with maps, it’s essential . . . A map must distort reality.”²⁰ World maps, which are the primary type under discussion, contain the greatest distortion.²¹ Tobler therefore had merely to find the correct projection and the Hereford Map resolved itself into near-perfection. While the Hereford map looks inaccurate to modern eyes, this notion must be tempered by the knowledge that the Mercator Projection, very popular throughout the Cold War, renders the USSR two-hundred-and-twenty-three percent larger than it was.²² (See Chapter 1, Fig. 2) In this case, paranoia of the ‘Communist Threat’ fueled, consciously or otherwise, the reproduction of maps with areas of great interest becoming dramatically enlarged. Similarly,

on the Hereford map, the central regions of the world—the all-important Holy Lands—and the British Isles are rendered out of proportion, larger than the rest of the world.²³ As Klein writes, “distortions exist because the conceptual overrides the practical in most instances.”²⁴

While a number of map types survive from the Middle Ages, I would like to focus on a variety particularly popular in England. P. D. A. Harvey believes that “the large world map, the cloth of the world, was a peculiarly English genre.”²⁵ Catherine Delano-Smith and Roger Kain concur, noting that “the *mappamundi* is undoubtedly the most idiosyncratic, even spectacular, map genre of all times, and was of particular importance in England.”²⁶ The authors are not referring to all maps of the world, but a particular variety, categorized as ‘transitional’ by Harvey or ‘detailed’ by Edson.²⁷ The list of noteworthy *mappaemundi*, large and small, which survive from medieval England, is impressive. Among others, we have the Hereford, Ebstorf, Tiberius B.v. (or Anglo-Saxon or Cotton), Vercelli, Duchy of Cornwall, Sawley (or Henry of Mainz), Aslake and Psalter (BL Add. 28681) maps.²⁸

What purpose could such maps have served? Harvey is correct to assert that “there was no such thing in the Middle Ages as a general map designed to be put to a wide variety of uses.”²⁹ Still, like the vast majority of medieval images, these maps would have been multivalent, open to a wide range of potential interpretations within their intended purposes. According to Delano-Smith and Kain, this function, for “ninety percent of the maps which have survived or which we know about from before 1350 [in England] was pedagogic, didactic or exegetic.”³⁰ All these uses are, in essence, contemplative. The audiences of most early medieval maps, which are generally contained in manuscripts also housing other Latin texts, would have been largely monastic. The monks, generally Benedictines, would have taken a vow of *stabilitas loci*, that is they vowed not to travel. Therefore, within the cloister the practice of *perigrinatio in stabilitate*, of taking a pilgrimage without leaving home, arose.³¹ World maps would function for these monks as contemplative aids in their internal or discursive spiritual pilgrimages.³² In the generally contemplative atmosphere of the monastery, where *ruminatio* was a centerpiece of mental and spiritual life, these maps would have functioned as yet another text to chew and digest. Indeed, the Hereford map may have actually served as a retable or altarpiece, a locus for devotion.³³ A monk needing to justify this activity would have to look no further than Augustine, who writes, “the circle of the earth is our great book. In it I read the perfection which is promised in the book of God.”³⁴

The most complete of the surviving medieval English world maps, the Hereford map, remains in the collection of the cathedral at Hereford where it has most likely been virtually since it was created by Richard of Haldingham

some time toward the very end of the thirteenth century.³⁵ (See Fig. 1) Scott Westrem's *The Hereford Map* contains excellent, detailed images of the entire map, which allow for close observation.³⁶ Although this map is chronologically later than the other works under discussion, its clear structural links with earlier works—including the Tiberius B.v. Map bound with the Tiberius *Marvels*—and its conceptual connections with earlier world-views render its inclusion appropriate within this framework. Indeed, according to Philip Alexander, the Hereford *Mappamundi* “was already antiquated when it was produced. It is a survival from an earlier age.”³⁷ Indeed, P.D.A. Harvey argues that world maps linked with the Hereford map were in circulation at least by the twelfth century.³⁸ The map was originally much more colorful, with whiter vellum, greener seas, and blue rivers that now appear black because the paint has flaked off to reveal the ground beneath.³⁹ Since the map is an independent work, never housed in a manuscript, it was not preserved and protected as some other works were. Even in its current state, the map is impressive; more than a world map, it is really a universal history containing the earth, Heaven and Hell (at the top) and all of time, from the Temptation and Fall in the Garden of Eden, through the Flood, indicated by Noah's Ark and the Parting of the Red Sea, to the very end of time, depicted as a Last Judgment at the top of the map. This massive cosmology would have provided an ample meal for monastic *ruminatio*, perfectly fulfilling Richard Gameson's conception of the role of art in the church:

Art taught Man how to conceive the mysteries of Christianity and explained what God was like. It also supplied tangible spirituality on earth, providing both the means to perform liturgical ceremonies and devotional acts, and foci at which to direct them.⁴⁰

Medieval English viewers of the Hereford map and its cousins might have turned to these maps for the same reasons they focused on their own origin myths, in order to determine where they were living and, by implication, who they were as a people, race or nation. The British Isles are located at the lower left extreme of the ‘orbit’ of the earth, in what medieval viewers would have understood to represent the northwest. This causes confusion for modern viewers, used to orienting maps to the north, but as the etymology of the word indicates, it is by no means more natural to orient maps toward the north than it is to orient them toward the Orient. Indeed, both are ideologically loaded decisions:

Any kind of real-world depiction, whether it is a map, a story or even a photograph, contains unconscious messages as well as conscious ones from its author. There can be no neutral map of a place and certainly no neutral map of the world.⁴¹

Certainly, in the Judeo-Christian worldview—which dominated the Middle Ages and persists in the west today, despite our broader knowledge of the earth’s place in the astronomical universe—up and down bear undeniable connotations.

Maps are, of course, not only ideologically oriented; they are ideologically centered, as well. The government-issued *National Atlas of the United States* of 1970, for example, contains two similarly circular world maps, centered on the United States.⁴² Tellingly entitled “World Around the United States,” this map is oddly reminiscent of the Hereford map, presenting the United States as the stable center in an otherwise ‘distorted’ and generally unfamiliar whorl of continents that, with the exception of South America, are barely recognizable. (Fig. 2.2) This view, far more centrist than that provided by the Hereford map, glori-

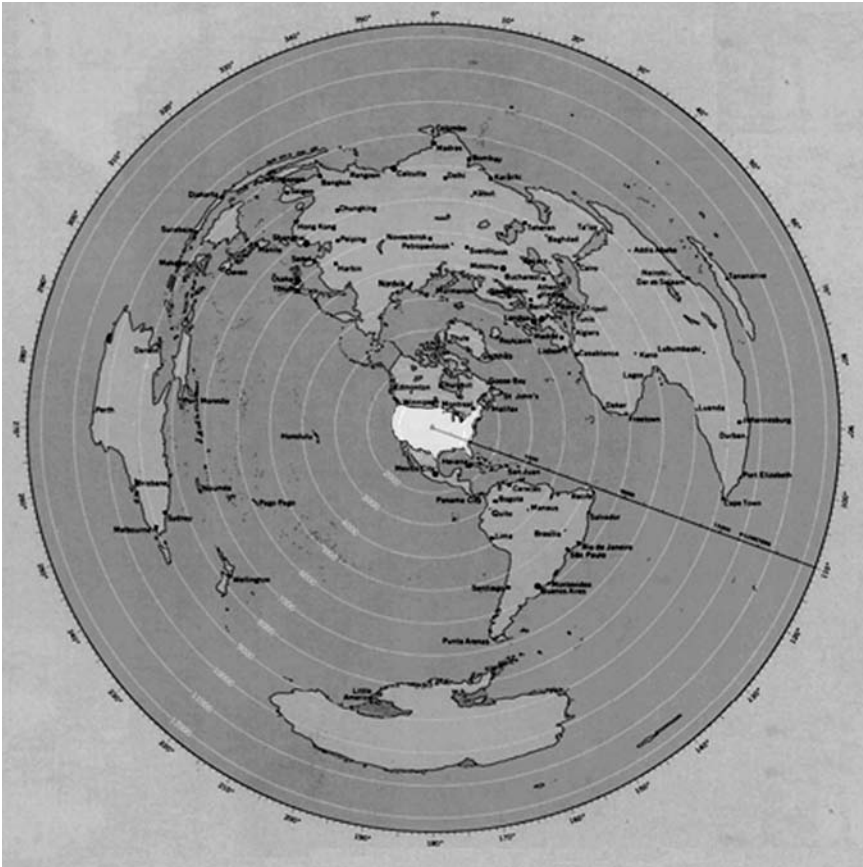


Figure 2.2. *The National Atlas of the United States*, p. 329, World Around the United States Map.

fies the U.S. at the expense of most of Europe, Asia, South America and Africa, which are all drastically cropped on this map. Indeed, the British Isles do appear and, as on the Hereford map, are again shunted to the very edge of the circle of the world. Through these visual devices, the map boldly declares the geographic centrality of United States which is, of course, arbitrary and mythical. The map also argues implicitly for the centrality of the United States to global affairs of any and all sorts.

This is not surprising. Maps produced by nations often center on themselves. Returning to the Hereford map, we must now contend with the decision of Richard of Haldingham, the creator of the Hereford map, to place his own nation at the outer edge of the world, toward the lowest point on the map. Kathy Lavezzo, who also discusses the self-defined marginality of Anglo-Saxon England, writes that "the English were physically remote from world centers, but, as the presence of *mappae mundi* in England attests, they were not so remote as to be ignorant of their border identity."⁴³ In placing England at the edge of his map, Richard is consciously maintaining the literary tradition established above, as well as a cartographic convention visible in many surviving maps. If Britain is at the edge, what is placed in the center? Here, precisely located at the exact center, is the walled city of Jerusalem. In their foundational text, William Bevan and H. W. Phillott considered

foremost among the peculiarities of Mediæval geography . . . the opinion that Jerusalem occupied the center of the habitable world . . . It is not the only instance in which men have conferred honour on their holy places by regarding them as occupying the central boss or umbilic of the habitable world: It was thus that the Greeks regarded their Delphi, the Hindoos their Merou, the Persians their Kangdix, and the Arabs their Aryne. It was not unnatural that the Jews, and still more the Christians, should attribute the same property to Jerusalem, which for centuries had been the focus of their aspirations, their anxieties, and their most devoted exertions.⁴⁴

Indeed, Richard had ample textual support for this decision, beginning with the most authoritative of all sources: The Bible. Psalm 73 in the *Vulgate* informs us that God performs the work of salvation "in the middle of the earth." Jerome connected this passage to Ezekiel 5:5: "This the Lord God said: I have placed Jerusalem in the middle of the peoples, and around her the lands."⁴⁵ For Jerome, who is following these two texts, Jerusalem is not only in the center of the Earth, but "is therefore situated in the midst of the

peoples" of the Earth.⁴⁶ This is significant because many of the writers and illuminators drew connections between groups and their locations.

The only two surviving accounts of Christian pilgrimage to Jerusalem which predate Jerome do not refer to it as the center of the world.⁴⁷ Only one of the many Latin accounts from the fifth through the ninth centuries makes this reference, and it is perhaps not without significance that this is an insular account. Adamnan, the seventh-century abbot of Iona, in his *De locis sanctis* (*On the Holy Places*) provides scientific evidence for the centrality of Jerusalem, informing us that the column which marks the precise center of the city casts no shadows at noon on the summer solstice.⁴⁸ Saewulf, an Anglo-Saxon pilgrim whose travels to Jerusalem spanned 1101–1103, also referred to this city as the center of earth, describing "a place that is called 'Compass,' where our lord, Jesus Christ, with his own hand marked the middle of the world and measured it, as the psalmist witnesses."⁴⁹ Based on Jerome's commentary, this account recalls images of the divine architect, as in an eleventh-century Bible in the British Museum.⁵⁰ (Fig. 2.3) In this image, God hovers over creation, holding in his right hand a compass with which he will measure the world. Saewulf's text also resonates well with the Hereford map, which literally bears in the very center of Jerusalem the mark of the point of the compass that Richard used to draw the circle of the world.⁵¹ Through the passage in Saewulf's account, this minute detail, this tiny hole at the very center of Richard's diagram of divine creation links the act of the artist with the act of the original Creator, at once granting divinity to the act of the illuminator and humanizing Christ's act of measurement.

Against all this visual and textual evidence, some have questioned the centrality of Jerusalem to medieval culture, since it was under Muslim control for much of the Middle Ages. Chana Safrai dismisses this, writing that the notion that "a central place needs to be accessible is a matter of debate . . . Low accessibility does not necessarily reduce centrality."⁵² Surrounded by forbidding crenellations and further protected by eight gates, all apparently locked and barred, the Holy City is the unattainable focus of the entire map. Indeed, try as one may, in viewing the map one is always seeing the center.⁵³

CENTERING THE PERIPHERY

This selection of the many sources referring to Jerusalem as the center of the world and universe should suffice to establish the notion as widespread and predominant.⁵⁴ As these quotations indicate, the belief was not merely geographical but religious. Indeed, as with most medieval philosophies and debates, it has its roots in biblical interpretation, and these authors have used geography as a

venue for a discussion of more 'vital' matters. In this way, medieval world maps present the world "not merely geographically as a physical arrangement of lands and waters but theologically as the site of salvation history."⁵⁵ What does all this mean for the English viewers who stood before the Hereford map or any of the other world maps centered on Jerusalem? The location of England on world maps is "a peripheral position remote from the foci of Christian affairs in Rome, Byzantium and the Holy Land."⁵⁶ Indeed, the British Isles are represented at the farthest extreme of the globe. *The Book of Mandeville* notes that the journey inward is a journey upward: "For in going from Scotland and England to Jerusalem one is continually climbing."⁵⁷ Certainly, this is a spiritual climb from the farthest extreme, which is the lowest morally and spiritually, toward the holy perfection of the center. Jerusalem is the clear center of the world, with Southern Europe, Northern Africa and Western Asia constituting the central *ecumene*, or inhabitable world; the land beyond this zone, as Mary Campbell observes, is the domain of monsters.⁵⁸ Kathy Lavezzo writes:

The farther away a people lay from the center, the greater their perceived disenfranchisement from the Christian *iokumené*: beyond the Christian nations at the heart of *mappae mundi* lay the Jews and Moslems; beyond the Jews and Moslems lay the barbaric tribes; and beyond them, at the very edges of the world, lay the Plinian or monstrous races.⁵⁹

Looking at the world maps, this certainly seems to be the case. In addition to the monsters at the southern edge of the Hereford map, we also find monsters at the edge of the small 'Psalter map' from British Library Add. 28681. (Fig. 2.4) As on the Hereford map, the southern edge of the world is bordered by the monstrous races, now contained within a series of small, alternating blue and orange boxes. The creator of the Ebstorf map, perhaps on account of its great size, found room to include not one but two bands of monsters and monstrous men south of the Nile. (See Chapter 1, Fig. 1.7) Most remarkably, and once more seeming to link the monstrous and the miraculous, the only surviving fragment of the Duchy of Cornwall map, a contemporary of Hereford on a slightly larger scale, contains a set of monstrous men between the Nile and the ocean, which are still vividly blue and green.

Mappaemundi like Hereford and the Psalter map have been termed 'transitional' maps, in that they depict a more 'realistic' world which may bear traces of the earliest portolan charts but nonetheless still preserve the essence of the ancient T-O format.⁶⁰ (See Chapter 1, Fig. 1.5) The straight lines of the standard Isidorian tripartite map have been replaced with the irregular, organic coastlines of the Mediterranean, but the overall layout



Figure 2.4. London, British Library Add. 28681, f. 9r, the Psalter Map. (By permission of the British Library.)

remains the same. We still find Asia dominating the top, or eastern half of the world, with Europe and Africa neatly divided in the bottom, or western half. Reading the Hereford map as a linear diagram, according to the T-O format, we find that England and Africa are placed at opposite ends of the world, with the eastern extreme of Africa lying more or less across the diameter of the circle which demarcates the map.

This interpretation, while widely accepted as valid, is not the only possibility. The similarities between the T-O maps and the maps I am discussing are strong, but there are vital points of divergence. The primary difference, compositionally, is the presence of Jerusalem in the center of the latter, which serves to reorganize the space radically. Rather than beginning at one edge and working across the entire earth to get to the other, I suggest that we start in the center, at the 'navel of the world' and the hub of the map. On the Hereford and Psalter maps, Jerusalem is depicted as a series of concentric circles, establishing a radiating pattern. If we prefer to start at the edges and work inward, we find another pair of rings which could be seen as functioning to establish concentricity, as observed by Klein.⁶¹ Returning to the center and working outward on each map, we are presented with a succession of roughly circular regions. Jerusalem is of course surrounded by the Holy Land, with Bethlehem visible just to the southwest and on the Hereford map a depiction of the Crucifixion appears just above it. Next are the central regions of the Roman Empire, containing such focal points as Rome, Greece and Hippo in North Africa (with an image of St. Augustine). Harvey notes that in these areas, roughly speaking, "little is shown beyond rivers, mountains, provincial boundaries and towns" whereas "elsewhere is an encyclopaedic mass of information about the people, the history and the natural history of distant lands."⁶² Finally, the outermost band contains the monstrous races of Africa and the British Isles.

It is now logical to take a closer look at the rest of the world's rim on the Hereford map. We should hardly be surprised to find that the world's monsters are by no means quarantined within Africa, segregated out by the purifying waters of the Nile. To the contrary, the entire outer band of the world is teeming with monstrous life. While the region south of the Nile contains the most obvious concentration of creatures, working around the rim of the world we find a large selection of marvels. Circling counterclockwise from Africa into Asia, just past the very red Red Sea is a large elephant and beyond this is a pair of dog-headed *gigantes*. Continuing around and down the left edge of the map, we encounter among many others a *sciopod*, a bird-man called

a *cicone*, a bull-headed minotaur-like creature, a pair of cannibals, two *cynocephali*, the *Griste* who wear human skins and, finally, bounding England to the north and south, two versions of Scylla, the classical sea monster. Circled for easier viewing, the dominating presence of monstrous races around the rim of the map is clear. (Fig. 2.5) The Hereford map is too encyclopedic to be entirely free of monstrous beings throughout its central regions, but looking to a simpler map, this arrangement is more obvious. On the Psalter map,

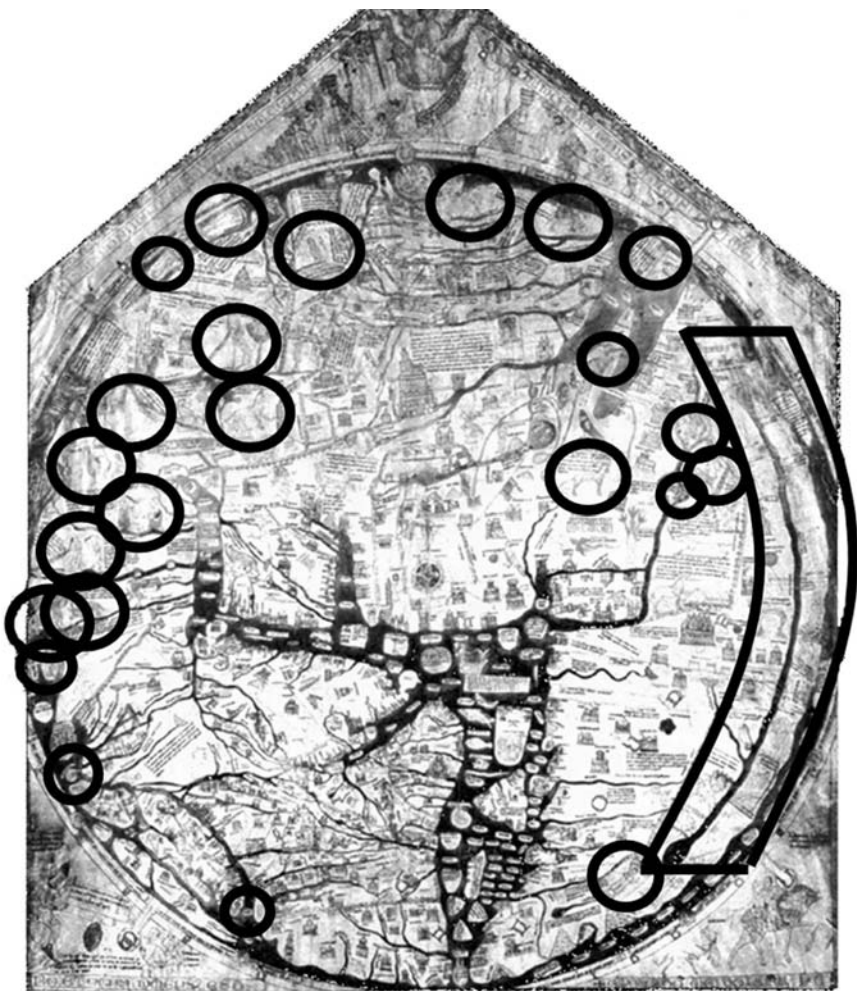


Figure 2.5. Hereford World Map, Marvelous Races and Monsters Circled. (By permission of the Dean and Chapter of Hereford and the Hereford Mappa Mundi Trust.)

the monsters of southwestern Africa are neatly balanced by the wall containing Gog and Magog to the northeast, while the center remains clear of such disturbances. Essentially, the edge of the map, and therefore of the medieval English world, inclined toward monstrosity while the center, with its images of the Crucifixion and the heavenly Jerusalem, contained the sacred and divine.

In discussing these monstrous races, it is worth remembering that 'race' as a term in American scholarship was originally used to refer only to:

the most marginal of the several social groups inhabiting the territories that subsequently became the U.S. The term 'race' was initially applied only to those groups that were hyper-oppressed, while the dominant groups regarded themselves as unaffected by this system of demarcation, and unmarked by the branding iron of 'nature.'⁶³

Camille argues that the edge of world maps was "a space for ejecting the undesirable—the banished, outlawed, leprous, scabrous outcasts of society."⁶⁴ While this notion is compelling, like the badly damaged Duchy of Cornwall map it does not provide the full picture. If we could reconstruct this map, working along the lower rim of the world, we would undoubtedly find at the northeastern extreme, balanced against the monstrous races, the British Isles, the home of the map's creators. The edge of the world was the space of the "outcasts of society," the uncivilized and barbarous, but time and again, this is where the medieval English placed themselves and their land. If, as Veronica Sekules argues, the monstrous races "were ghettoised in traveler's accounts and on *map-pae mundi* as the heathen 'other,'" then the English dwelled in the same ghetto.⁶⁵

According to Denis Wood, "maps are about relationships. In other words, they are about how one landscape—a landscape of roads, of rivers, of cities, government, sustenance, poison, the good life, of whatever—is positioned in relation to another."⁶⁶ The relationships on the Hereford map, and the Psalter and Ebstorf maps, as well as, no doubt, the damaged Duchy of Cornwall map, are of primary concern. These great cosmologies, these universal diagrams were visual explorations of the place of the Anglo-Saxons and later English peoples within the divine system of creation. Jeremy Black, in discussing power relations on maps, notes that "imaginary worlds are far more potent. The mapping of religious worlds—of myths, cosmological understandings and earthly perceptions of different faiths—was and is an exercise in the depiction and projection of power."⁶⁷ Where, in this system, did the English locate themselves? As discussed at length above, they placed themselves at the very edge of the known world. This location is relative to

Jerusalem. Turning to the maps, we can see that the monstrous races are in much the same relationship with Jerusalem, and therefore with the sacred center of Creation. What, then, is the relationship between these two extremes? Once the maps have been reconsidered as radially configured, it becomes clear that England and southern Africa are not diametric opposites, but rather, are two points on the same ring. They share qualities of exile and liminality with one another as they—like the monstrous embodiments of the winds in the circuit surrounding the ocean on the Hereford map—look inward to Jerusalem. On the Ebstorf map, the reason for this inward gaze becomes clear: Here, within the formidable walls of Jerusalem, the resurrected Christ rises triumphantly from his tomb, thereby transforming Jerusalem from the earthly to the heavenly city. (Fig. 2.6) As Iain Higgins observes, the format of these maps constantly directs the viewer's gaze back toward the all-important center, which can never be forgotten.⁶⁸ He writes, “separated by the Mediterranean from Europe, the Holy Land lies far away, yet it is near in significance.”⁶⁹ The Holy Land is divided by water from continental Europe. Britain, then, is doubly separated from it, set apart by the

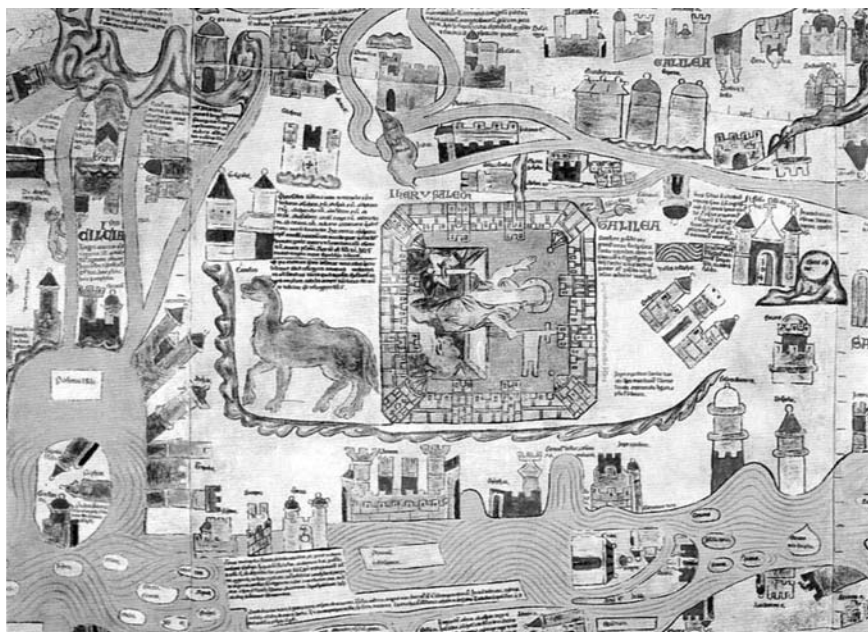


Figure 2.6. Ebstorf World Map, Detail of Jerusalem. (By permission of the British Library.)

Mediterranean and then the English Channel, part of that ‘uncrossable circuit’ of sea lamented by Gildas.

Given the broad conceptual overlap between England and Africa, we ought not to be all that surprised by the great blunder made by a rubricator adding a few touches to the Hereford map. In gold majuscule, still brightly burnished after seven centuries, he inscribed “*AFFRICA*” on Europe and “*EUROPA*” on Africa. Written after all the images and other texts were in place, these were not careless or haphazard additions. Each letter was painstakingly placed to avoid overlapping any elements of the dense network of images and texts; yet as a whole they are glaringly erroneous. This is not the only such mistake. As discussed above, on the text-filled T-O map in an Anglo-Saxon copy of Isidore’s *De natura rerum*, the continents of Europe and Africa are entirely reversed, not just in name but in contents. (See Chapter 1, Fig. 1.5) How could these mistakes, if that is what they are, have been made? Perhaps the conceptual connection between England and Africa was clearer in the minds of medieval artists and writers than it has been to modern audiences.

Geoffrey of Monmouth’s twelfth-century *British History* provides a further connection between England and Africa. Aurelius asks the famous wizard Merlin to make a lasting monument in commemoration of a major victory:

Merlin said, “If you desire to honor the burials of these heroes with an everlasting work, send for the Giants’ Dance, which is on Mount Killaraus in Ireland. For there is a stone structure that nobody of this age could construct, unless they were moved through ingenious skill. They are great stones, nor is there someone to whose strength they would yield. Once they are moved to that place, having been set in a circle on that spot, they will stand eternally . . . They are mystic stones and have various medical healing properties. The giants, in days past, carried them from the farthest boundary of Africa and placed them in Ireland when they lived there.”⁷⁰

Uther Pendragon, Geoffrey tells us, was sent with 15,000 men to retrieve these stones and they were then set up in England. In this passage, England and Africa are linked through a monument which has reasonably been compared to Stonehenge.⁷¹ Gerald of Wales, who cites Geoffrey, provides an expanded description of the Giants’ Dance:

It is marvelous how many stones and of such magnitude were gathered together in one place and raised; and with what art the stones of such

size and height were placed on top of others that were no smaller. They are thus hanging, and seem to be suspended in air, so that they seem to rest on the effort of the craftsman, rather than on the base.⁷²

In both of these accounts, the British Isles are connected to Africa not through ordinary human efforts, but through the work of giants and magicians.⁷³ These extremes of the world, located within the liminal band at the edge of the *mappaemundi*, have both been home to monsters which are connected to the very identities of their current inhabitants. Michael Camille advises us that, in dealing with marginalia, “we have to stand on the margins with the monsters and see what vantage point that reveals.”⁷⁴ For the English, this would not have been a stretch; this was their home.

Chapter Three

The Monsters on the Edge

On the world maps, the races of southern Africa tend to merge into a single conglomeration of monstrosity. Despite the careful delineation of the territorial boundaries which separate them, their concentration, bounded on all the maps by the strong presence of the Nile and the ocean, compresses them into a collective entity. This grotesque mass of life, teeming behind the Nile, bears implications for the rest of the world, casting the human race as a paragon of normality, by providing “something to match the European Christian standard against.”¹ As Michael Uebel writes, “when twelfth-century writers push the monstrous to the edge, force it to discursive thresholds, collective identity emerges, but it does so only under the constant threat of the monster it created.”² By lumping all the monsters together on the maps, the creators of these maps have established a diametric world in which a constant battle rages between Men and Monsters. We might expect this to be an instance of Us versus Them. However, these categories are quickly threatened by the presence of humans among the monsters, and human parts in the literal composition of seemingly inhuman monsters. For example, the people who must eat through a straw are physically all but normal.³ (See Chapter 1, Fig. 1.1) Just to the northeast of these people we find the *fauni*, a race of creatures resembling classical centaurs (and, perhaps, evoking images of the horsemen, Hengest and Horsa). (See also Chapter 1, Fig. 1.1) They are, as their text and image indicate, half-horse and half-man, and as such they defy categorization as either animal or man.⁴ Wearing a crown, this regal figure cannot even be declared thoroughly uncivilized. This figure seems to cause trouble even for modern scholars seeking to categorize the creatures which appear on these maps. Klein provides annotated diagrams of the “Animals” and “‘Strange’ Races” on the Hereford Map.⁵ In devising these two categories, Klein has created for herself a sticky problem. Many of the creatures on the map might fit in either category, or neither. In fact, Klein includes the

fauni (centaurs) on both lists. Perhaps she does so because the map's text informs us that "centaurs are half-horse, half-human."⁶ Still, if the *fauni* might fit into both categories, what about the mermaid, the minotaur or even the sphinx, which has bird's feathers and serpentine legs but also a girl's torso and head?⁷ Each of these creatures possesses attributes belonging to animals and humans; if they must be classified, they must be labeled hybrids. As such, they are both the Other and the Self, both 'Them' and 'Us.'

If we cannot maintain the opposition between the English men and the African monsters, we must try to find another collective identity. Considering the connections between England and Africa, and the massing of monstrosity around the rim of the map, perhaps we can link these two groups together in opposition to the circular perfection of Jerusalem at the center. Rather than Men versus Monsters, the Hereford map actually seems to group all the marginal regions together in antithesis to the holy center. Perhaps this is why, as Susan Kim notes, the Anglo-Saxons were perfectly willing to identify not only with the Romans but also with the monsters.⁸ Indeed, at the Synod of Whitby, it was declared that unique practices within England and Ireland functioned as a "barrier to full Christian unity and harmony."⁹ While these differences may not have been as important as some have argued, nonetheless the author of this text deemed them significant enough to set the British Isles apart from the rest of Christendom.

Given the English identification with the monsters of the East, and the position of these monsters on the maps, which among other purposes serve as diagrams of salvation, their repeated focus on geography and monstrosity suggests a discomfort with their own location, geographically and spiritually. Camille has written that "marginal art is about the anxiety of nomination and the problem of signifying nothing in order to give birth to meaning at the centre."¹⁰ I would like for a moment to dwell on one set of these monsters. At the eastern extreme of the map, at its very apex, are two dog-headed *gigantes*, or giants. (Fig. 3.1) They stand, arm in arm, apparently conversing with one another. To the left of this pair is an image of the Expulsion of Adam and Eve, and farther left is the Temptation in the Garden of Eden. Reading from left to right, as we would a text, we move forward through time. We begin, of course, in the Garden. At its very center is the Tree, and around it twists the Serpent, who passes the apple to Eve with its mouth, biting it before she does. Behind her, Adam also bites the apple. For this great transgression, they are thrown out of the Garden, into the harsh and cruel world, never to return. The angel with his fiery sword guards the way. Like Hereford's Jerusalem, Eden is encircled by a crenelated wall, fortified and impregnable. Like the wall of Gog and Magog on the Psalter map, this wall

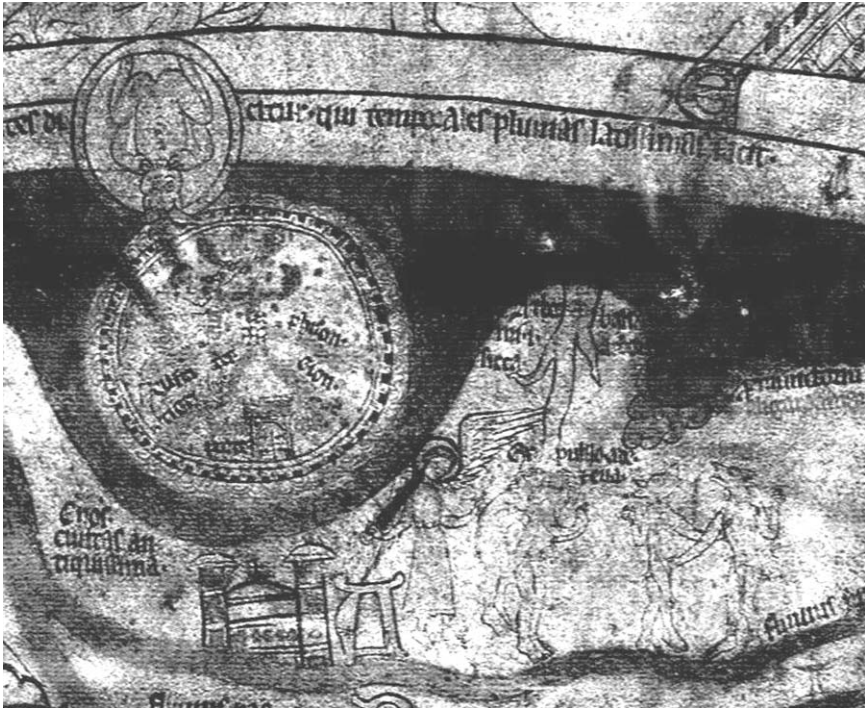


Figure 3.1. Hereford World Map, Detail of Gigantes and Eden. (By permission of the Dean and Chapter of Hereford and the Hereford Mappa Mundi Trust.)

contains a single high door, clearly locked and barred. (See Chapter 2, Fig. 2.4) The fortress seems to have been constructed in response to the post-lapsarian figures. Before the fall, there was no need to bar the entrance to Eden. And, like the gate to the kingdom of Gog and Magog described in Revelation 20:7, this gate will be opened at the end of time. Continuing to read from left to right, as is natural to readers of English and Latin, we confront the dog-headed *gigantes*. These are actually *cynocephali*, whose usual habitat is southern Africa, where they appear on the Ebstorf map labeled with the abbreviation “*gigs*.” (See Chapter 1, Fig. 1.7) Perhaps they have been relocated to the far East in order to present Adam and Eve with an immediate challenge, an instant indication of the nature of the world outside of Eden. These frightful creatures, as the *Marvels of the East* informs us, have the teeth of a wild boar, the head of a dog, and breath “fire and flame.”¹¹ Having entered the world at its very margin, Adam and Eve were likely to stumble upon such unpleasant characters.

However, it is worth noting that Eden, the terrestrial Paradise, is also located at the edge of the world. For Augustine of Hippo, the great fifth-century theologian and exegete, "Paradise, in which God placed [man], is to be understood as nothing but a place on earth, where terrestrial man would live," and Bede agrees.¹² Isidore also believes Paradise to be a tangible place that is located "in the east."¹³ An Anglo-Saxon commentary on Isidore expands on this: "Certain ones are of the opinion that [Paradise] has been placed in the eastern sea," and this is how it appears on the Hereford map.¹⁴ The twelfth-century Sawley Abbey (or Henry of Mainz) map also represents Paradise as an island at the eastern extreme of the world.¹⁵ (Fig. 3.2) Like England, Ireland and southern Africa, Eden is separated on both these maps from the Pangea-like landmass of the *ecumene* by a band of water. As Julia Kristeva writes, "the abject is edged with the sublime."¹⁶ Both the monstrous and the miraculous are located in this liminal zone, which delineates the boundary of the world.

This is a crucial point on the Hereford map, where earthly Paradise and earthly suffering are separated by a thin belt of water. While the island of Eden is isolated to the west by water, and guarded by its barred gate and armed angel, on its eastern shore it delicately adjoins a circle containing a hideous, toad-like beast which seems a grotesque distortion of one of the classical winds. Instead of emitting cheerful, billowing clouds, this creature, like the nearby *cynocephali*, spits bilious flames. Its three fiery tongues lick at the edges of Eden, which is barely protected by fortified walls. The circle surrounding this hunched critter forms a bridge which links earthly Paradise to its heavenly counterpart, where Christ sits in judgment.

Cosmas Indicopleustes, the earliest medieval Christian cosmographer, provides a description of the Tabernacle, which, like the *mappaemundi* was "a pattern of the visible world."¹⁷ In the Tabernacle is a table representing the world, described as follows:

[Moses] commanded also to be wreathed all around the rim of the table a waved moulding, to represent the multitude of waters, that is, the ocean; and further, in the circuit of the waved work, a crown to be set on the circumference of the palm of the hand, to represent the land beyond the ocean, and encircling it, where in the east lies Paradise, and where also the extremities of the heaven are bound to the extremities of the earth.¹⁸

The Hereford map represents this notion very literally, with Paradise in the east, forming a link between heaven and earth, but otherwise separated by

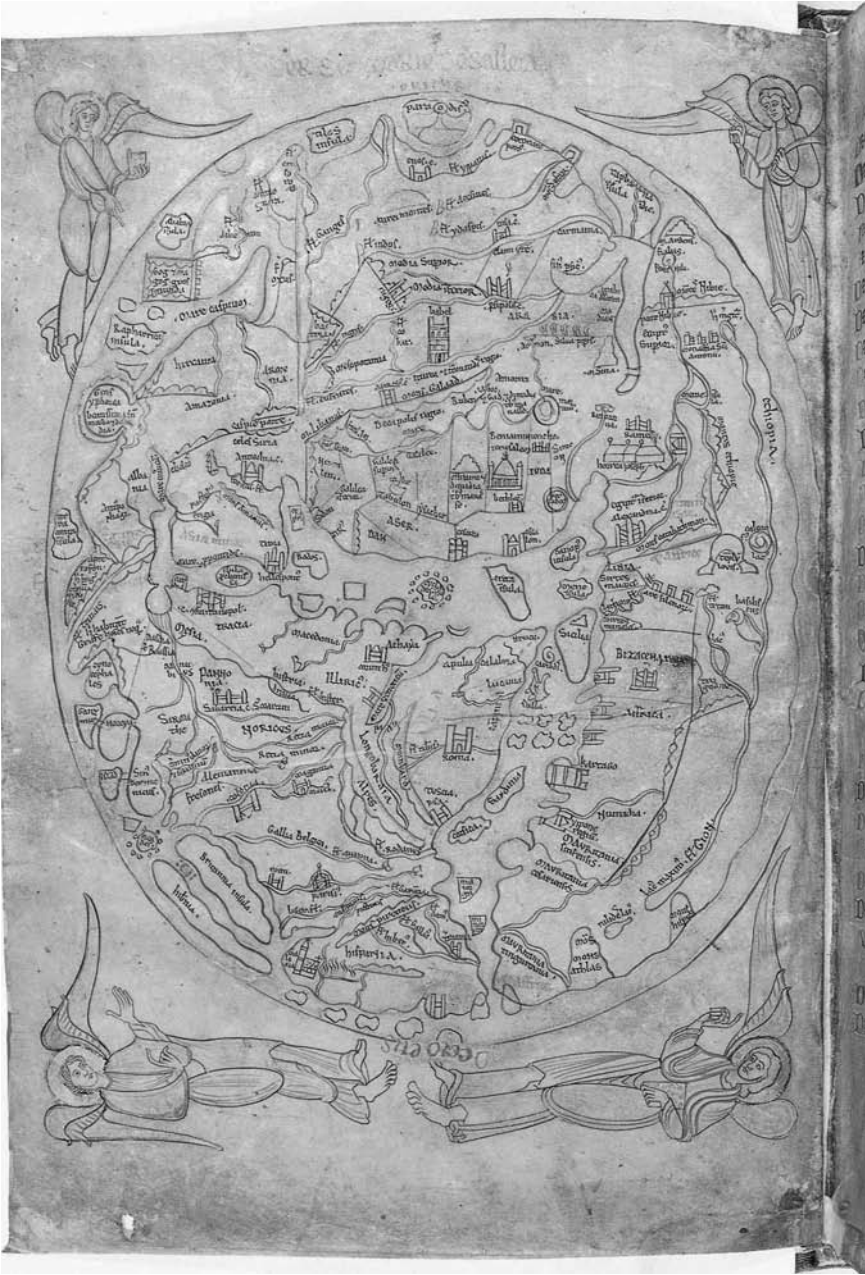


Figure 3.2. Cambridge, Corpus Christi College Library, MS 66, p. 2, Sawley Abbey Map. (By permission of the Master and Fellows of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.)

the 'multitude of waters.' In the monster-filled world of the English, we should not be surprised that the circular bridge between these two sites of perfection is inhabited by the squatting toad-man. Pointing his bare behind toward the Virgin's bared breasts and his fiery tongues toward Eden, the creature seems an offensive affront to the sacred regions above and below him. In Lavezzo's words, the borders of the world were "objects of idealization and derision, hope and dread; lairs of monsters and devils, angels and saints; geographic borders . . . were rendered markedly ambivalent."¹⁹

Returning to the nearby *gigantes* with this context in mind, perhaps an alternate interpretation can be rendered. Following the canonical chronological narrative outlined above, Adam and Eve begin in the Garden, where they eat the fruit of the Tree and are expelled. They then wander forth, wringing their hands in shame and fear. In front of them are the *gigantes*. While they may stand spatially in front of the first couple, might they also stand temporally in front of them, forming the third installment of a three-part series concerning the Fall of Man? In each image, we have two figures, nude and joined together through the contact of their arms. In Eden, Adam rests his arm on Eve's shoulder as he takes the fatal bite. Outside the gate, they hunch away from the admonishing gesture of the angel; Eve now reaches forward with both arms to lean on Adam for support as he (his figure partially damaged) seems to turn a tear-stained face backward to look upon the placid face of the angel. Finally, we confront the *gigantes*. Again, the nude figures reach out to one another, looking for succor in this time of great distress. Thrown from Paradise, having relinquished their state of ignorant perfection, perhaps the progenitors of the whole of humanity have here been transformed by their inner wickedness into monsters, who can only turn to one another and wordlessly howl out their desperate frustrations. This would not be the only instance of biblical or holy figures being described as *cynocephali*. In one account, Saint Christopher is described not merely as a giant, but as dog-headed, as well.²⁰

In the very act of creating a map, the cartographers are working to establish systems of hierarchy through spatial relations. They also create hierarchies through systems of inclusion and exclusion. For example, as Harvey notes, pilgrimage sites feature prominently on the Hereford map.²¹ Indeed, these centers are visually represented not as cities but as the churches which would have formed their focal points. In this manner, the entire world is constituted as a network of churches stretching far and wide. Of course, map makers must select what to include in their maps, and conversely what to exclude.²² Denis Wood provides a clear example. In viewing a number of maps of his home town, he noticed that while some show his house and some do not, none presented other details:

The shifting shade or even the cars that despite the early Sunday morning hour do not hesitate to hustle down the road . . . They even show the garage we took down the day we moved in. But they don't note the squirrels or the pecan tree they nest in, though this is larger (and in the long run more important) than the house . . . "Irrelevant," one mutters . . . "Too ephemeral, too transitory," says another . . . "Birds and bees? The mapmakers weren't interested in those things." Exactly. So what did they map? What they were interested in. And this is the interest the map embodies . . . inevitably.²³

The Hereford map includes major pilgrimage sites, in the form of towns and their churches (i.e. Paris, Compostella and Rome), sites of important biblical events (i.e. the parted Red Sea and the Tower of Babel), points of local interest (Hereford and its environs) and, of course, many, many monsters. It does not include very much else. Forests and plains, bogs and lakes, indeed virtually all natural environments short of seas, rivers and mountains are generally effaced. In his discussion of the maps of Matthew Paris, Michael Gaudio argues that nature is overwritten as a negative space, as vacant points of "discontinuity between sites of civilization . . . Emptied of meaning, the natural world thus becomes a non-space that allows human interpretation to enter into the cartographic text."²⁴ The natural landscape, with the exception of rivers and mountains, is simply absent. Also missing are the marks of other religions. No mosques and no Jewish temples are featured on the Hereford map, even though its representation of the Holy Land is dramatically enlarged.²⁵ Indeed, given the active nature of the Crusades throughout the period, the omission of any indication of Muslim presence seems rather deliberate. In comparison, a Flemish map of Jerusalem from the twelfth century is bordered at the base of the page with an image of crusaders in combat who serve to "remind the viewer that this is contested territory, land that has been hard won and is worth defending."²⁶ (Fig. 3.3) In this manner, as Mark Monmonier asserts, "cartographic silences are a form of geographic disinformation."²⁷

The creators of the *mappaemundi* were able to exclude their monstrous Others from their maps, as they did with their human Others, but they did not. On the contrary, the maps are overflowing with them. They were a vital portion of the medieval English world view, always present and never forgotten. Nevertheless, while they are given a strong visual presence, they are not granted free reign. The threat they represent, which for John Friedman is the threat of bursting into the world of the European reader and viewer, is at least partially contained through various means.²⁸ Certainly, the world maps are filled

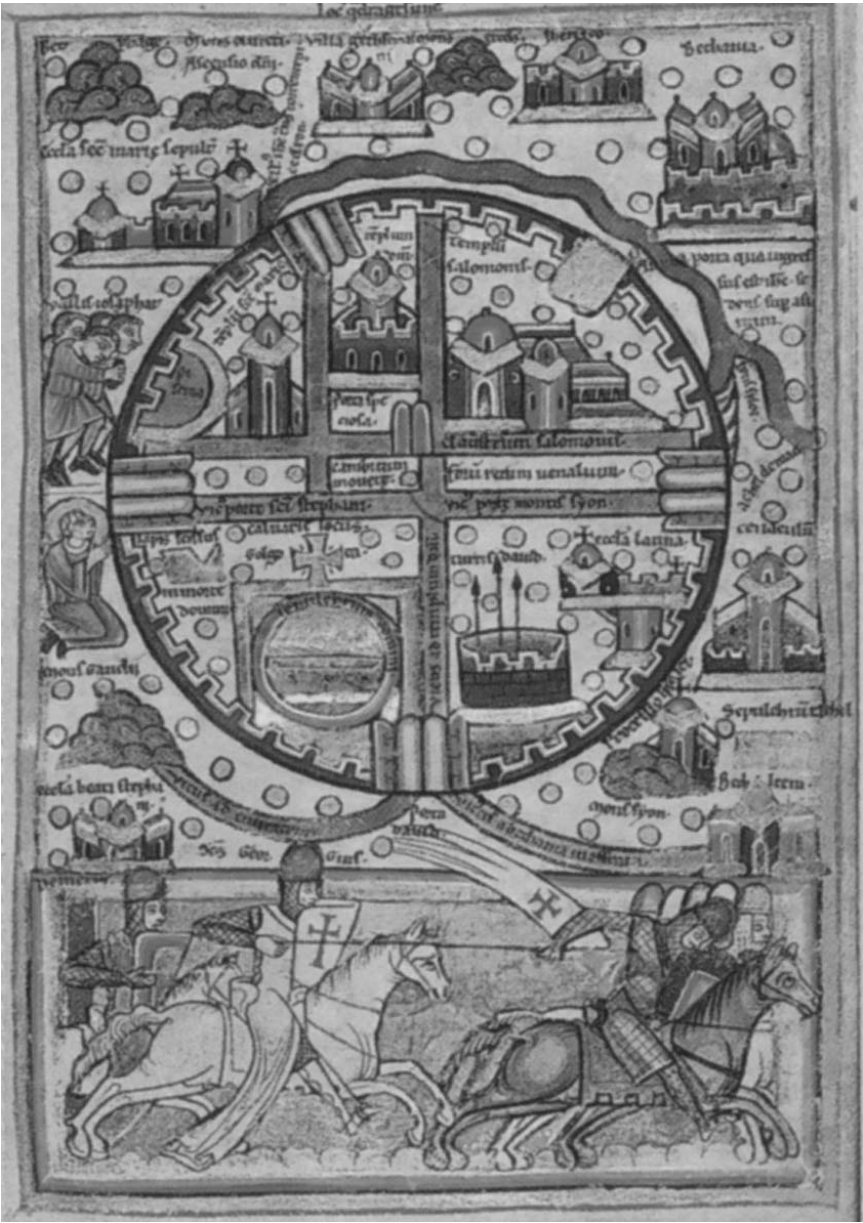


Figure 3.3. The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 76.F.5, f. 1r, the Hague Map of Jerusalem. (By permission of The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek.)

with monsters, most of whom inhabit the edges of the world. With the presence of these creatures comes the attendant "desire to isolate and contain them."²⁹

Several devices were used to contain the threats represented by the monsters which populate the margins. For Sylvia Tomasch, geography "always enjoins an element of control, of conquest, even of ravishment."³⁰ First, Others are carefully classified by race. As Jeffrey Cohen notes, the act of naming is a controlling maneuver: "A fixation is born of the twin desire to name that which is difficult to apprehend and to domesticate (and therefore disempower) that which threatens."³¹ In 1849, Benjamin Disraeli declared in House of Commons that "race implies difference, difference implies superiority, and superiority leads to predominance."³² In the mid-nineteenth century, when many theories of racial divergence were proliferating, discussions often centered on the "Cephalic Index" developed by Anders Retzius, a Swedish anatomist and anthropologist.³³ Different skull sizes and shapes suggested different mental qualities and abilities. While not always the case, many of the monstrous races vary from normal humans in some feature of their heads. The *cynocephali* have dog's heads, the *donestre* have lion-like heads, the *amyctyrae* have huge lower lips, and the *blemmyes* have no heads, at all. Just as Retzius used the Cephalic Index to differentiate between human races, medieval artists and the classical authors who inspired them often did likewise. Inherent in this differentiation, for Disraeli and others, is a hierarchy of power relations. Charles Mackay, in his 1866 diatribe against "The Negro and the Negrophilists," asked:

Is it possible for the European races, Anglo-Saxon, Teutonic, or Celtic, to live in peace and amity with the African, in any country where the whites and blacks are equal, or nearly equal, in point of numbers, and especially, as in Jamaica and South Carolina, where the blacks are in the majority, unless the whites control and govern?³⁴

Mackay's answer, of course, is an unequivocal 'no.' Returning to the medieval maps, control of the Other seems central. It has been argued that "maps are about social control and are usually created to serve the designs of their creators rather than to inform 'the public.'"³⁵ With regard to the monstrous races, this is undoubtedly the case. While Richard of Haldingham, the cartographer of the Hereford Map, invited his viewers to "behold my witness," his map is not merely an account of the world as he 'beheld' it.³⁶ The construction of a map involves not merely the representation of the world but its definition. Behind every clearly delineated box in Africa on the Hereford map, and on the

Psalter and Ebstorf maps as well, lies an ideological attempt to control the wild, teeming mass of freak-show oddities. Diane MacDonald notes that, for postmodern discourse, “the very enterprise of systematizing the complex phenomena of this world is a violent act.”³⁷ I think this was no less so for the medieval artists and authors who, time and again, tried to categorize these category-defying creatures in whom, according to Cohen, “one kind of difference becomes another as the normative categories of gender, sexuality, national identity, and ethnicity all slide together like the imbricated circles of a Venn diagram.”³⁸ On the Hereford map, for example, we find the *marsok*, a wild beast that can change its shape.³⁹ (Fig. 3.4) This creature is, as we



Figure 3.4. Hereford World Map, Detail of Marsok. (By permission of the Dean and Chapter of Hereford and the Hereford Mappa Mundi Trust.)

watch, in the process of defying categorization. Each of its four feet belongs to a different category of animal. Its forefeet seem to be a paw and a webbed bird's foot, while to the rear it has a hoof and, most interestingly, an ordinary, five-toed human foot. While at first glance, this creature appears to be just another unusual quadruped, it is in fact in the process of shifting from bird to beast, from predator to prey and from animal to human.⁴⁰

What category could possibly contain this creature which, on its various appendages, is creeping perilously close to Jerusalem? In fact, it seems to be a textbook-perfect example of Kristeva's 'abject,' which she defines as that which "does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite."⁴¹ What is so disturbing about this situation? What is the danger of a creature that suggests our systems of categorization are not as stable as we might think? For Michael Uebel, "monsters expose classificatory boundaries as fragile by always threatening to dissolve the border between other and same, nature and culture, exteriority and interiority."⁴² This is the threat of the *marsoke* and, indeed, of all the monsters. It may seem immaterial that they collapse the distinction between hoofed and pawed (although this does muddle the careful delineation of clean and unclean animals in Leviticus 11:3–6, the same passage that inspired the pervasive monastic metaphor of *rumination*⁴³), but by threatening our definitions of ourselves as human beings, they challenge components much more vital to our world views. Just as modern analysis of the gene code, with all its potential for cloning and artificially manufactured humans, has caused discomfort and fear among many scientists and politicians, so too these hybrid beings would no doubt have unsettled their medieval viewers.⁴⁴

Gog and Magog, the biblical progenitors of an evil and malicious race, provide the ultimate expression of the need for containment. Originally derived from a few passages in Genesis, Ezekiel and Revelation, they also feature prominently in the Alexander Legend, in which the great conqueror contains their threat by building a huge wall to trap them within the Caucas Mountains.⁴⁵ This massive wall features prominently on a few of the world maps. Like the Great Wall of China viewed through satellite photography, it stands as a symbol of human might and engineering and, in this case, at least temporary success in containing a monstrous element of the world. On the Psalter map, the wall is one of only a small handful of visible manmade features. (See Chapter 2, Fig. 4) On the Tiberius B.v. map, where Gog and Magog make their earliest known cartographic appearance, they are once more labeled and walled in. On the Hereford map, characteristic of its encyclopedic coverage, Gog and Magog and their descendants appear three times. They are mentioned by name twice and by implication a third time. The

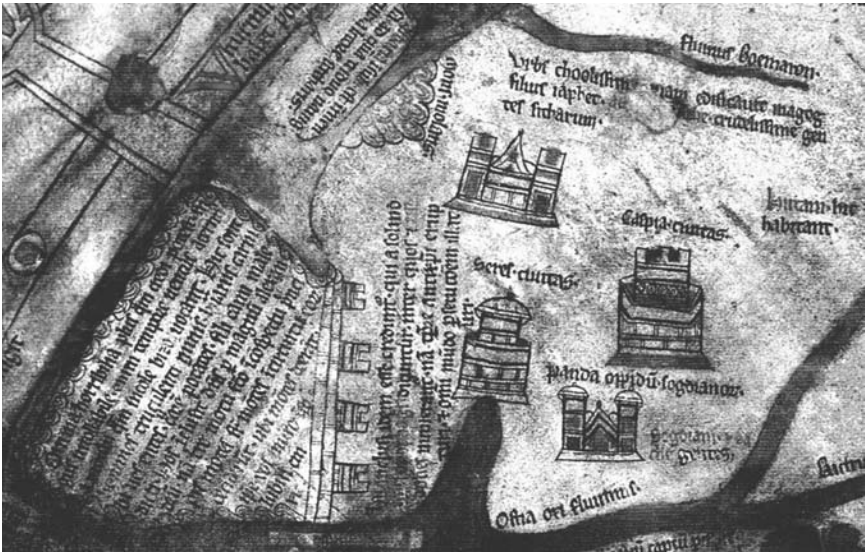


Figure 3.5. Hereford World Map, Detail of Choolissime and Wall of Gog and Magog. (By permission of the Dean and Chapter of Hereford and the Hereford Mappa Mundi Trust.)

briefest of the instances merely states that the city of Choolissime was built by Magog and is now inhabited by “the cruelest people.”⁴⁶ (Fig. 3.5) The image of their city, however, seems unremarkable. Gog and Magog appear again, just to the northwest of Choolissime, now behind Alexander’s wall. (See also Fig. 5) Here, the text is more descriptive, although it does not mention the monstrous pair by name:

[Here are found] all horrors, greater than it is possible to believe. Intolerable cold, a cutting wind always from the mountains, which the inhabitants call “bizo.” Here are exceedingly ferocious men, feeding on human flesh, drinking gore; foul sons of Cain. They were imprisoned by the Lord through Alexander the Great, for, within the prince’s sight, the earth moved, mountains fell down on top of mountains in a circle around them. Where mountains were lacking, he encircled them with an indestructible wall.⁴⁷

Given their repellent climate, it is not surprising that they are anxious to break out and take revenge on the outside world. Again, the foul people are not depicted, but their wall is visibly drawn. Cutting a straight east-west line,

it closes off the entrance to a peninsula which is then encircled on its three other sides by fiery red mountains. The third appearance of Gog and Magog is closer still to the British Isles, on the island of Terraconta, located in the same band of ocean, just to the northeast. (Fig. 3.6) Here, they are described as “a barbarous and foul people, devouring the flesh of youths and the prematurely born.”⁴⁸ Their presence on what almost seems to be an extra, northernmost member of the British Isles recalls the passage from the *Historia Brittonum*, cited above, which links the children of Magog with the British as distant cousins.⁴⁹

This heinous race of vicious, blood-gulping cannibals is contained behind an impressive wall on the Psalter map, and yet the presence of the



Figure 3.6. Hereford World Map, Detail of the Island of Terraconta. (By permission of the Dean and Chapter of Hereford and the Hereford Mappa Mundi Trust.)

gate implies the possibility of their eventual release. (See Chapter 2, Fig. 2.4) Cohen rightly asserts that “the monster always escapes.”⁵⁰ In this manner, the wall is not ‘indestructible,’ regardless of what the Hereford map might claim. And on the Hereford map, while Alexander’s wall is high and gateless, with tall towers punctuating its course, the race of Gog and Magog is already outside, dwelling freely on Terraconta and in Choolissime. For Cohen, “the monster’s very existence is a rebuke to boundary and enclosure.”⁵¹ This biblical race of monstrous men is prophesied to be gathered together as an army by Satan once he, too, has broken free of his imprisonment:

And when the one thousand years have been completed, Satan will be set free from his prison and he will go out and will lead the people from the four corners of the world, Gog and Magog, and will assemble those in battle whose number is as the sands of the sea.⁵²

According to Ezekiel, this apocalyptic race is due to break “out of [their] hidden place in the north . . . all riding on horses as a great group and a violent army.”⁵³ Their ‘intolerably cold’ land to the north is not far from the British Isles, described by Bede at the outset of this chapter as “almost under the north pole of the world.”⁵⁴ Both lands, at the very periphery of the world, form part of the great monstrous ring, far from Jerusalem and the Holy Land, which separates the *ecumene* from the ‘boundless ocean’ which surrounds it.

Eviatar Zerubavel provides a further suggestion to explain why a small, peripheral group like the English would spend so much time and energy focusing on the boundaries that separated them from their Others. Zerubavel writes:

A particular obsession with boundaries usually characterizes groups that perceive themselves as minorities in constant danger of extinction. They regard their boundaries as critical to their survival and feel that, unless they seal them off so as to preserve their distinctiveness, they will inevitably be assimilated into their surroundings and cease to exist as a distinct entity. Firm boundaries that set them clearly apart from their social surrounds are thus central to the very definition of communes, nations, ethnic groups, and social elites.⁵⁵

Surrounded as they were, especially early in the period, by various Others real and imaginary, from Celts and Picts to *gigantes* and cannibals, the Anglo-Saxons may have felt themselves under constant threat of destruction. In Bede’s words,

the “zealous flock” was constantly endangered by the “wickedness of attacking wolves.”⁵⁶ Bede calls all towns “useful to neither God nor man” that “neither keep a regular monastic life, nor possess soldiers or followers for the secular authorities to protect our people from the barbarians.”⁵⁷ He feared that, owing to the “diminishing abundance of the secular army, those who should protect our boundaries from the barbarian incursions have withdrawn.”⁵⁸ The middle portion of this period was also marked by Viking raids, which seem from the admittedly biased Christian sources to justify Bede’s fears.⁵⁹ These various fears, these deep-seated anxieties, may be at play in the *mappaemundi*.

* * *

Denis Wood asserts, in regard to modern works:

There is nothing natural about a map. It is a cultural artifact, a cumulation of choices made among choices every one of which reveals a value: Not the world, but a slice of a piece of the world; not nature but a slant on it; not innocent, but loaded with intentions and purposes; not directly, but through a glass; not straight, but mediated by words and other signs; not, in a word, as it is.⁶⁰

The modern maps Woods is discussing look, to our eyes, so much more accurate, more natural. And yet all maps, medieval, modern and otherwise, are deeply embedded in the culture that created them.

The medieval English world maps served a number of purposes, but now they function primarily as diagrams of the perspectives of their creators. They present a wealth of information, some directly though much implicitly. Their overall organization is of greatest interest. Medieval English cartographers saw fit to place themselves in alignment with those barely conceivable beings—the headless men, dog-headed giants, centaurs and such—living in distant Africa. In doing so, they located themselves in the margin, amongst their frightening, monstrous Others, reserving the pride of place, the center of the map, for the unattainable, holy perfection of the heavenly Jerusalem.

Part Two

The Marvels of the East over Three Centuries and a Millennium

Chapter Four

The Reality and Persistence of Monsters

Medievalists, according to Caroline Bynum, must write about “what is other—radically terrifyingly, fascinatingly other.”¹ The fascination we feel in dealing with fundamentally different cultures, and the attendant trepidation such encounters inspire, would not have been unfamiliar to the Anglo-Saxons. They, too, chose to dwell upon that which is Other, often terrifyingly so. I am separated from my Anglo-Saxon Others by a chronological gap which cannot be crossed. They were separated from a number of theirs by equally insurmountable geographical stretches. For them, many of their Others were monstrous, not only in the metaphorical way in which we now use the term, but in the most literal sense. They were not merely monstrous; they were actual monsters, such as we find catalogued in an eleventh-century English manuscript of the *Liber Monstrorum* (*Book of Monsters*).² The preface to this work explains that it was written in response to a request for knowledge:

You have asked about the hidden parts of the orb of the earth, and if so many races of monsters ought to be believed in which are shown in the hidden parts of the world, throughout the deserts and the islands of the ocean, and are sustained in the most distant mountains . . . and that I ought to describe the monstrous parts of humans and the most horrible wild animals and innumerable forms of beasts and the most dreadful types of dragons and serpents and vipers.³

Where did such monsters—or at least their legends—come from? Although housed in a manuscript that also contains works by Bede, this text, like others to be discussed below, is not Anglo-Saxon in origin. The *Liber Monstrorum* is Classical, although this version of the text contains medieval additions. The text itself is therefore something of a cultural Other, absorbed

and integrated into an Anglo-Saxon context. Its anonymous author is justifiably skeptical about a number of the tales he has heard of monsters in far-off lands which “if it were possible to fly with wings, exploring, one might prove to be seen as fictions, despite so much talk.”⁴ If, that is, one were oneself monstrous—a hybrid bird-man, for example—then one could disprove the existence of monsters. Notwithstanding, the author begins his catalogue with a personally verified account, writing, “in the beginning of this work, I declare that I knew a certain man, who nevertheless appeared in the face and in the breast much more masculine than feminine . . . but he delighted in women’s work.”⁵ Here, the author tells us that he is relying on personal experience and his description, relatively commonplace rather than monstrous by twenty-first-century standards, gives us no reason to suspect otherwise. Still, for a medieval reader, this individual would be a troublesome transgressor of rather elemental societal divisions. On the other hand, many of the monsters that follow and which are described and depicted elsewhere were not likely to have been personally observed, regardless of their authors’ claims.⁶

If authors and illuminators were not relying on personal experience for their descriptions of monstrosity, upon what other sources might they rely? The converted Anglo-Saxons considered Scripture to be the most reliable source of information, literally accurate in all its details. Beginning with Genesis, the book of the Old Testament most often reproduced in Anglo-Saxon England, we read that “giants were on the earth in those days.”⁷ This verse merited illustration in the *Hexateuch*, an extensively illuminated volume containing the first six books of the Old Testament, introduced by a prefatory letter by Ælfric.⁸ (Fig. 4.1) These figures fill their half-page frame. They are logically the largest among the thousands of figures in this massive volume, as if drawn to scale within the manuscript, but they are otherwise not particularly fearsome or monstrous. Quite to the contrary, they gesture to one another in a restrained manner as they seem to hold a polite conversation. Their modes of dress, hair and beard in no way distinguish them from the rest of the biblical characters. There are numerous other references to giants and other monsters in the Old Testament, with Goliath as the most famous example.⁹ While twenty-first-century readers might scoff at the notion of turning to the Bible for scientific information about the races of the Earth, this was still being done well into the nineteenth-century, when prolific essayist and novelist Charles Mackay wrote that Acts 17:26 (God made of one blood all nations of the earth.) was in common usage by “preachers, professional lecturers, salaried philanthropists, and weak-minded women . . . together with the philosophers and the strong-minded women . . . and all the multitude of theorists” in discussions of the human races.¹⁰



Figure 4.1. London, British Library, Cotton Claudius B.iv, f. 13r, Giants, the *Hexateuch*. (By permission of the British Library.)

Giants also appear as a common Anglo-Saxon poetic trope. As part of a semi-mythical history, they were credited with having built the monumental stone structures which remained from prehistory and the Roman occupation of Britain.¹¹ *The Ruin* describes one such building in its opening lines:

Splendid is the rampart, broken by fate;
the burg burst apart, the work of giants crumbles.¹²

This *enta geweorc*, this work of giants, was considered to be too great to have been the product of human labor. The trope of *enta geweorc* served to distance the Anglo-Saxons from the entirely human past of Britain. Of course, all the Christian and, indeed, Jewish and Moslem world would have had the Biblical texts which may have inspired some of these later accounts, and yet “there is something distinctly Anglo-Saxon about this fascination with giants

conjoined to the formation of alienated, human identities.”¹³ In an Old English homily, giants were connected with two other traditions: Classical antiquity, kept alive through the monastic copying of texts, and Germanic religion, still very much alive in the living memories and beliefs even of long-converted groups.¹⁴ Biblically sanctioned giants are used by an Anglo-Saxon homilist as an explanation for the otherwise inexplicable worship of beings outside the Christian context:

The devil ruled men in Middle-Earth, and all that time he worked against God and God’s servants, and he raised himself over all, and so the heathen men would say that the gods must be their heathen leaders, just as was Hercules the Giant and Apollo, for whom they forsook the great God; Thor also and Odin, whom heathen men praise exceedingly.¹⁵

Here, the divinity of Hercules and Thor, of Apollo and Odin is overwritten with monstrosity. Of course, the Germanic tradition had its own wealth of giants and other monsters, still a part of the active belief system of the Anglo-Saxons many centuries after Augustine of Canterbury’s missionary efforts. *Beowulf*, the greatest example of Anglo-Saxon heroic poetry, provides a list of such creatures following a description of the homophagic monster Grendel. The poet writes of “monsters and elves and orcs, and giants too.”¹⁶ We may be tempted to dismiss such accounts as ‘mere’ poetry, as a fictional reflection of imagination and whimsy or as metaphor rather than an indicator of practically held beliefs. Indeed, I think that it is very difficult to believe that such creatures were, for the Anglo-Saxons, “alien yet real,” and yet we must.¹⁷ Certainly, we might explain some of these beings, along with Susan Kim, as “literalised representations of their function as allegorical figures, or as signs.”¹⁸ Still, their use within allegories could also serve to indicate their supposed reality. Like the hedgehogs and beavers of the *Bestiaries*, certainly familiar to Anglo-Saxon readers, these marvels, freaks and miracles of nature would have been, although more distant, nonetheless quite real. Jonathan Sumption elaborates:

If the majority [of medievals] . . . accepted the evidence for miracles, it was not because they were unduly credulous or irrational, still less because they cared nothing for the truth. It was rather because in assessing the evidence they applied criteria very different from those of [Empiricist philosopher] David Hume. They may often have been misled by lying witnesses, but the fundamental cause of their error was that

they considered a miracle to be a normal, though nonetheless remarkable, incident of life.¹⁹

It is therefore not surprising that we find all three Anglo-Saxon versions of the *Marvels of the East* bound with other ‘factual’ matter, including works by Bede and Macrobius. These manuscripts are based on Classical Latin texts, derived from sources almost as much an Other to Anglo-Saxon England as the countries of Africa the text describes. However, in two of the three manuscripts, the text is provided in Old English, indicating that this Other has been absorbed, processed and repackaged for an Anglo-Saxon audience. The *Marvels* are simply included within the “corpus of factual literature about distant places.”²⁰ “But,” Augustine notes, “it is not necessary to believe in all the races of men, which are said to exist.”²¹ Still, even today there are many for whom this would seem to be within the realm of actual experience, as demonstrated by the endless eyewitness accounts still being reported of Bigfoot, the Yeti, aliens (who take their name from the Latin for “foreigner”) and, of course, the Loch-Ness Monster sighted by St. Columba in the sixth century.²² We may be quick to dismiss those who report such sightings as quacks, but that does not shake the conviction of contemporary ‘pilgrims’ who spend time and effort traveling to a cold lake in Scotland to see if the 1500-year-old monster is alive and well in the murk of Loch Ness. As Cohen writes, regardless of the illogic of such situations, “uncannily . . . the monster lives.”²³

Returning to medieval sources, we can examine other less poetic texts to document the belief in monsters. Wooden rune-sticks, rare survivals given their perishable substance, were used for various magical rituals of protection and invocation by several Germanic groups. While no physical rune sticks survive from Anglo-Saxon England, probably owing to their extreme fragility, poetic reference remains in “The Husband’s Message”:

hat you, adorned with jewels remember to yourself
in your mind the promise
that you two in former days often spoke.²⁴

These *rúnakefli* were used for many purposes—practical, prayerful, invocatory and magical. By far the greatest find of runesticks comes from Bergen, Norway, where a massive fire in 1955 opened extensive territory for archeological investigation. This set contains, as Ralph Eliott notes:

Christian prayers, Ave Marias, names of archangels, prayers for child-birth, some fifty fuparcs [or runic alphabets and] a charm against hostile

creatures which reads, "I cut runes of help, I cut runes of protection, once against the elves, twice against the trolls, thrice against the ogres."²⁵

Such inscriptions are part of a larger Scandinavian context, in which runes "could save one from all sorts of perilous situations," like battles or sea-voyages.²⁶ Even R. I. Page, who openly refers to himself as a "sceptical runologist" assumes it probable that the Anglo-Saxons turned to runes for magical help "quite extensively."²⁷ These runesticks were not used for the expression of poetic imagination, but for practical purposes, thus indicating real belief. Further, their call for protection suggests that this belief was strong enough to inspire fear. Finally, the structure of this particular protective charm implies the possibility of a hierarchy within the monstrous world in which ogres are more dangerous than trolls, who in turn are more dangerous than elves. Further support for the practical belief in monsters comes from medical texts and charms which appear in a variety of contexts. While magical charms may be found in a number of works, perhaps their most interesting occurrence is in the margins of an eleventh-century manuscript of an Old English translation of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, the same fundamental text which contains the origin myths of the Anglo-Saxons and attempts to explain who the Anglo-Saxons were and where they had come from. In addition to more pedestrian cures for common ailments such as eyeaches, earaches and stomach-aches, this manuscript also contains a charm for protection against all fiends.²⁸ Elsewhere appear a number of cures for *elfa-dle*, which is literally elf-disease, or nightmares inspired by the poisoned arrows of the same elves mentioned in *Beowulf* and on the rune sticks.²⁹ Collectively, these various examples serve to demonstrate that the Anglo-Saxons had a genuine belief in monsters and the dangers associated with them. Likewise, they suggest that the poetic and the practical are not as far apart as modern 'sensitivity' might lead us to believe.

The final source for monstrous inspiration was Classical. Just as the homily cited above groups Odin and Thor with Hercules and Apollo, so too the *Liber Monstrorum*, the *Book of Monsters*, forms a link between the monsters of *Beowulf* discussed above, the *eotenas*, *ylfe*, and *orcneas*, and the monsters of the *Marvels of the East* to be discussed at length below. In this work, Classical and Germanic monsters are listed in free association with one another. A description of Colossus directly follows that for Beowulf's uncle, King Hygelac of the Geats.³⁰ In this context, both are made monstrous, enlarged into giants. No distinction is made to account for their origins. Both are *monstra* from unspecified historical moments, and both are memorialized;

Hygelac's bones are on display on an island in the Rhine and Colossus, of course, was portrayed in a huge sculpture that, although long gone, remains "a work heard of throughout the whole orb of the earth."³¹

Monsters are threaded into all of the sources which comprised the fabric of Anglo-Saxon belief. They appear in the Bible, Germanic religion and popular belief, in medical texts, scientific encyclopedias and heroic poetry. Many of these sources point away from metaphor and symbol and instead toward a real, persistent belief in monsters, near and far. Over the course of three hundred years, from the tenth to the twelfth century, English monks produced at least three fully illustrated manuscripts of the *Marvels of the East*, a classically based encyclopedia of wondrous monsters.³² These are: London, British Library Cotton Vitellius A.xv, London, British Library Cotton Tiberius B.v and Oxford, Bodley 614 (hereafter referred to as Vitellius, Tiberius and Bodley).³³ Since they contain the same text, more or less, it is not surprising that they share a broad range of commonalities, visual and verbal. However, there are very significant differences in the content and format of these linked manuscripts. Despite these differences, and the expansion of the text through the inclusion of several additional 'marvels' in each subsequent version, the designers chose to retain certain seemingly insignificant visual details throughout. The accumulation of these and other editorial decisions resulted in fairly disparate products which nonetheless have generally been considered all together. Indeed, some scholars have worked to elide the differences, picking and choosing their favorite details from each in order to produce a composite manuscript, theoretically "better" than any that actually exists. An examination of some of the alterations that brought about the gradual transformations would greatly enrich our understanding of these three individual manuscripts, as well as the processes of 'copying' in the Middle Ages.

Vitellius has been dated to the late-tenth century.³⁴ Following on the heels of Edgar's peaceful reign, the late tenth century was dominated by the rule of Aethelred *Unraed*, "Good Advice the Ill-Advised."³⁵ While his thirty-seven years on the throne (979–1016) comprised one of the longest reigns in English history, Eric John refers to this period as "a reign of almost unremitting disaster."³⁶ This was a time of renewed Viking invasions, now being led by King Sweyn of Denmark, who was eventually victorious. Somewhere within this violent period of intense warfare, illuminators and scribes were at work on the turbid Vitellius manuscript, whose monsters overflow their boundaries as readily as King Sweyn crossed the North Sea.

The Tiberius manuscript was produced in the first half of the eleventh century, also a period of relative political instability. The beginning of the

century saw the Viking conquests, and Cnut's death in 1035 left England "on the verge of chaos."³⁷ In the thirty-one years between the death of Cnut and the Norman Conquest in 1066, Harold (1035–40), Harthacnut (1040–42) and Edward the Confessor (1042–66) all reigned. This overturn culminated in the famous squabble for succession which led to the Conquest. Sometime during this tumultuous period, the vigorous images of Tiberius were created. Bodley is dated more precisely, to ca. 1120–1140.³⁸ The last in this trio of *Marvels*, it was created on the far side of the Conquest, and is a more visually stable and restrained work.

The similarities between Tiberius and Bodley are clear. Still, there are significant differences, the most obvious being the discrepancy in size (Bodley is the smallest of the three, just over four by five inches and Tiberius the largest, at twice this size. Vitellius falls in between.). Some of the changes may be attributed to this variation alone. Nevertheless, Anglo-Saxon illuminators frequently altered images when producing copies. As Richard Gameson observes, "while absolute fidelity to the exemplar was the aim of the scribe, it was generally not that of the artist: at most his task was more like that of producing a paraphrase."³⁹ The necessity of scribal fidelity was vital for sacred texts, which were taken to be the word of God or of those saints blessed by him. They would have had images such as the Matthew portrait from the Lindisfarne Gospels, to serve as examples. (Fig. 4.2) Here, as in dozens of similar images, Matthew is shown not as an author, not as the creative, generative force behind his gospel, but rather, as a "perfect scribe," recording the word of God as conveyed to him by his ever-present symbol, the winged man or angel.⁴⁰ On the other hand, the scribes of these secular works seem to have felt no such obligation, altering both texts and images when the need or desire arose.

For Hillel Schwartz, the act of copying is equivalent to biological reproduction: "Copying makes us what we are. Our bodies take shape from the transcription of protein templates . . . To copy cell for cell, word for word, image for image, is to make the known world our own."⁴¹ When medieval scribes, illuminators and book binders accepted the task of producing a "copy" of a manuscript, this act was by no means one of mechanical reproduction. Rather, it was often an occasion for the reconsideration of the text at hand, resulting not in an identical clone, but rather, in a reinterpretation, a remix of sorts, composed mainly of elements present in the model or models but not beholden to them as wholes. Schwartz links modern mechanical copying with the power and mystery of the Holy Trinity: "Copying," she writes, "transforms the One into the Many."⁴² Just as the three members of the Trinity share an essence but are at the same time distinguishable, so to



Figure 4.2. British Library, Cotton Nero D.iv, f. 25v, Saint Matthew Author Portrait, the Lindisfarne Gospels. (By permission of the British Library.)

these monster-books are One and Three, the same in their most basic elements yet differing in their means of communication and, perhaps, in the world views they espouse.

The text of the *Marvels of the East* is divided into short, descriptive passages concerning each marvelous race.⁴³ There has been some debate regarding the proper term to use for these beings. I have chosen to follow the tradition of referring to them as “monstrous races” for several reasons. “Race” has a long and highly charged the legacy in the modern era that I believe is more helpful than harmful to our understanding of these beings because many of them were considered to be people—abnormal, sometimes dreadful, but nonetheless, people, distinct from other “races” in their physical features and cultural practices. They are time and again referred to as “men” and “women” in both the Latin and Old English versions of the *Marvels of the East*. I therefore wish to retain their essential humanity, which was a key component of their function, in my translations. Other terms (clan, group, tribe, kind) might be employed, but the power of “race” to conjure notions of race relations, racial politics, racial inequality, and so on, makes for a more powerful understanding of these beings, and might well reflect the sorts of interactions imagined by the readers of these texts. Essentially, I retain the term “race” because it makes us think of them as human, because it makes us think of our relations with them, and because it makes us think of our own world in a way “group” or “kind” would not.

I have selected one sample passage to serve as a model for consideration. About a dozen marvels into the manuscript in all three versions, we encounter the Two-Faced Men. (Fig. 4.3–4.5) Vitellius, the earliest version, tells us in Old English:

There is a race of men that are 15 feet tall and they have a white body and two faces on one head, very red feet and knees, a long nose and dark hair. When they wish to conceive, then they travel in ships to India and there bring their offspring into the world.⁴⁴

In Tiberius, the next in this non-linear sequence, the original Latin text has been added to the Old English, and indeed, placed before the Old English for each section. This decision may have been fueled by a number of concerns, but perhaps literacy was primary among them. Vitellius was created in the century following Alfred the Great’s efforts to encourage translation from Latin sources, since he acknowledged that “learning was almost totally obliterated” by war and political turmoil, with the result that Latin texts were “beyond the reach of most of his subjects.”⁴⁵ The designer of the Vitellius



Figure 4.3. London, British Library, Cotton Vitellius A.xv, f. 101v, Two-Faced Man, *Marvels of the East*. (From *The Electronic Beowulf*, edited by Kevin Kiernan, and used with permission of the British Library Board.)



Figure 4.4. London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius B.v, f. 81r, Two-Faced Man, *Marvels of the East*. (By permission of the British Library.)

Marvels clearly wished them to be accessible to a broader audience, that also would have been able to read (or understand when read aloud) the other works in this compilation manuscript, including *The Passion of Saint Christopher*, *The Letter of Alexander to Aristotle*, and of course, the great monster-poem, *Beowulf*.



Figure 4.5. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 614, f. 40r, Two-Faced Man, *Marvels of the East*. (By permission of the Bodleian Library, the University of Oxford.)

If Old English was more accessible, why would the designer of Tiberius include the Latin, as well? A century after Vitellius was produced, Latin literacy was more widespread and certainly preferred by the monastic authorities under

whom virtually all manuscripts were still produced. Why, then, go through the trouble of producing and including a new Old English translation, since that in Tiberius is not based on the one in Vitellius?⁴⁶ George Brown writes in regard to the glossed Psalters of the period that “the vernacular assisted in making the text not only performative but also informative.”⁴⁷ Since this text is not liturgical, the element of performance would likely have been less significant, though not necessarily irrelevant. This was the period of vernacular glosses sponsored by the Benedictine reform movement. Indeed, the reform movement favored the use of Anglo-Caroline minuscule for Latin and Insular pointed minuscule for Old English.⁴⁸ This practice is upheld in Tiberius, and not only makes it very easy for a reader to pick out the version of the text in the language he finds more accessible, but also serves to identify them implicitly. Caroline scripts are Continental in origin, and linked with the literacy and learning program sponsored by Charlemagne, from whom they take their name and after whom Alfred sought to model himself.⁴⁹ The insular script, on the other hand, was of course developed in the British Isles.⁵⁰ In this manner, the texts are not only distinguished, as they could have been through the use of any two scripts, but also located, with the Latin text associated with the Continent and the Old English translation situated firmly in England.

Paul Gibbs has convincingly argued that the texts of Bodley, the final manuscript in this trio, were based on Tiberius.⁵¹ Why, then, did its twelfth-century designer choose to omit the Old English translation? Some authors have suggested that this may be due to the size of the manuscript, but size, like all other attributes of a manuscript, is a factor to be weighed against the other needs and desires of the designer, and if he wanted a bilingual manuscript, it would have been sized accordingly. Its size has likewise been blamed on financial constraints, but this is hardly consistent with the fact that almost every folio of the manuscript contains two fully painted images. I believe that a more significant issue is the gulf of the Norman Conquest—the importance of which was hyperbolized by Eric John as “Götterdämmerung.”⁵² William brought in his train a new, French-speaking aristocracy by whom, in H. R. Loyn’s words, “the English language was relegated to a position of inferiority.”⁵³ In Tiberius, Old English was literally placed in the inferior position, below the Latin text, but in Bodley, Old English is not merely inferior. It is utterly absent, excised from the *Marvels* as Anglo-Saxons were being methodically eliminated from the secular and ecclesiastical hierarchies.

In addition to these major changes in formatting and language, there were some alterations made to the text, itself. As stated earlier, each version of the text has more marvels than the preceding version. Here, however, we

witness a counter-current. As Andy Orchard has observed, one of the added marvels is entirely Germanic in origin.⁵⁴ The “brothers who fight an endless battle” are derived from the Anglo-Latin version of the Hjaðningavíg.⁵⁵ However, on the whole, the changes are much more subtle. Returning to the passage describing the Two-Faced Man, we can track a few minor alterations. Vitellius specifies that the men have “very red *feet and knees*,” and “travel *in ships* to India,” whereas the Old English text of Tiberius makes no mention of their feet nor their ships.⁵⁶ The Latin portion of Tiberius also omits the mention of their feet, but states that they “travel *in bands* to India.” Bodley splits the difference, omitting the red feet but reinserting the ships.⁵⁷

Is there anything to be gleaned from these minor, insignificant variations? First, such information allowed Gibbs and Orchard to determine that Tiberius and Vitellius “do not derive directly from a common ancestor,” and that Bodley was copied directly or indirectly from Tiberius.⁵⁸ In his critical edition of the Vitellius *Marvels*, Orchard subtly bridges the gap, reinserting ‘missing’ passages and standardizing the word forms with the result that his edition of Vitellius ends up appearing more like Tiberius than it is. He of course does gloss these changes thoroughly, but his main text and facing translation, which are presented as the *Marvels* from Vitellius, are not exactly such. Indeed, I am left to wonder if Orchard is not in some way uncomfortable with the murky nature of this rather badly damaged manuscript. He does find occasion to disparage its wonderful illuminations by means of comparison with Tiberius, stating that the later manuscript contains “a fuller (and much finer) set of illustrations.”⁵⁹ They are only fuller in that there are more marvels included in Tiberius, overall, and they are only finer in that they are painted with more regular proportions, more firm outlines and more boldly contrasting colors, though it is by no means clear to me that this makes them more well-suited to the task of representing frightening, unknown, border-challenging composite monsters from the other side of the world.

Orchard makes one more move to blur the boundaries between these rather disparate manuscripts, thereby presenting in essence one super-manuscript having the slightly longer and more regular text and the more sharply delineated images of Tiberius but the wonderful monster-filled context of Vitellius, which is part of the *Beowulf* manuscript. He does this by presenting, on the very cover of his book—which is explicitly about “the Monsters of the *Beowulf* Manuscript”—an image of a marvel from the Tiberius manuscript. This is the *blemmye*, a headless giant with his face in his chest. The image is unquestionably gripping, but we must ask: Are there no similarly compelling images in Vitellius? Of course there are. The Vitellius *blemmye*,

for example, is marvelous, with its wide, staring eyes, its gold-hewed eyebrows, and its charming stripped Anglo-Saxon stockings. This would have served equally well for Orchard's cover, in my opinion, but like all of the images in Vitellius, its contrast is now lessened owing to the darkening of the vellum in the great Cotton library fire.

The images, like the texts, are a mixed bag, some almost completely dissimilar and others surprisingly consistent across this disparate and only partially related set of cousin manuscripts. Nonetheless, certain images in these manuscripts seem to maintain a self-consciously rigid continuity from one manuscript to the next. The two-faced men, for example, are extremely similar in Tiberius and Bodley. Both illustrations follow the text, but they also share features not mentioned by the text. Their poses are almost identical, and each man holds in his right hand a horn with the bell pointing inward and up. The text specifies that these men have "long noses," and indeed they do, but in both manuscripts, the rear-facing faces have longer, more pointed noses and the front-facing faces have broader noses. More significant, and perhaps more surprising, is the similarity between this pair of images and its counterpart in the Vitellius manuscript, which on the whole is less similar and is generally considered to be based on a different exemplar.⁶⁰ Here, we are again presented with a two-faced figure whose head and feet overlap the frame in which he is centered. Again, he holds the horn, facing inward, which is not mentioned in the text. Again, there is a line of dark hair running down the center of the head, separating one face from the other. And again, we even find that the left face bears a longer, sharper nose and the right face bears a large, broader nose. Curiously, all three pay no attention to the textual mention of red knees and feet. Is there any significance in these individual details? Perhaps there is more that might be immediately apparent. Carol Neuman de Vegvar has recently produced a thorough discussion of drinking horns in Anglo-Saxon England.⁶¹ Such implements were banned from use in the mass in the eighth century because, according to the proceedings of a synod at Celchyth, "they are bloody."⁶² De Vegvar interprets this to mean not merely that they come from animals but, much more interestingly, that their intimate association with secular feasting and boasting, such as we find in *Beowulf*—and their attendant military obligations—tainted these vessels and thereby rendered them unfit for sacred rituals.⁶³ The large horns held by the Two-Faced Men may be intended to represent aurochs horns like those found in the Sutton Hoo treasure. Far greater and more dangerous than its domesticated cousin, the aurochs came to represent strength, and the hunting of these giant bulls was, according to Caesar's *Commentaries on the Gallic War*, "a test of courage among the Germani":⁶⁴

With this labor, young men are hardened, and they exercise by the undertaking of this hunt, and if anyone kills many in his hunt, he returns to his people with the horns, which are a testimony, and they bring great praise.

In addition to the doubly violent connotations behind these horns, they may also imply over-indulgence. Rupert Bruce-Mitford has concluded that aurochs horns like those buried at Sutton Hoo would have held two liters—a prodigious amount for one drinker—and so it is likely the contents were shared as the horn was passed around the feast-table.⁶⁵ Two more implications may therefore be sloshing about within the drinking horns. First, if the Two-Faced Man is consuming the full contents of such a horn (and, of course, he himself is said to be fifteen feet tall, indicating this to be a horn that would put all others to shame), then surely he is—like Polyphemos—inclined toward overindulgence. Second, the horn may serve to stress his isolation. The drinking horn was a social item, a symbolic vessel the sharing of which bound men to one another. But the Two-Faced Men in all three *Marvels* are pointedly alone. Like the giants of the *Maxims*, cited about, these giants are also “lonely within the land.”⁶⁶ Perhaps, then, the horns are retained in these images not simply because they were found in the exemplars, but rather, because they bear meanings that the illuminators wished to preserve. The retention of these horns suggests a certain lonely, drunken violence about the Two-Faced Men, which would have increased their apparent threat.

The accumulation of the similarities—meaningful horns, yes, but also noses, hair, pose and composition—indicates a desire to maintain continuity, to preserve ethnographic information through the centuries. These three images are all fairly literal representations of their texts, and yet within these confines, their designers had plenty of room for wide variation. Why, then, did they choose to preserve this visual continuity, when there are such differences in the text? I would argue that, in some manner, these images represent lasting notions in Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman culture. These monster-books even help to suggest the continuity of culture across the so-called *Götterdämmerung* of the Norman Conquest. They seem to have been viewed as repositories of information which the creators of these manuscripts wished to preserve accurately. The similarities are so strong that we must conclude—particularly from visual details like the horns in the Two-Faced Men’s hands, not mentioned in any version of the text—that many of the images were based on common exemplars, against the evidence presented by the texts. Still, these manuscripts can hardly be dismissed as the result of slavish copying. Rather,

they call into question the very nature of copying in the Middle Ages, which involved a great deal of editing. I would take this one step further to argue that the later two manuscripts are not “copies,” at all, indirect or otherwise. Rather, like Giles Deluze’s “simulacrum,” they work to deny the very notion of “the original and the copy, the model and the representation . . . There is no possible hierarchy, no second, no third.”⁶⁷ Still, for Deluze, this notion relies on the indistinguishability of the versions, which become on account of their similarity doppelgängers. In the case of the three *Marvels*, while each is a monstrous duplicate of the last, they are not identical triplets. Rather, each is the monstrous progeny of other monstrous manuscripts and circumstances that, in their coupling, never duplicate themselves precisely.

The *Marvels* contain a series of descriptions from dog-headed and headless men to plants which produce precious stones. These accounts of various human, animal and plant oddities are disconnected, discontinuous descriptions.⁶⁸ The format is an adaptation from the original ancient Greece source, which framed this information within a narrative context. Here, extracted and essentialized, they become little ethnographical and zoological morsels, easily consumable individually or all together. These passages tend to contain the same basic information for each Marvel: Name, location, appearance and diet. This pattern, apparently quite appealing, continued to be used for discussions of “monstrous” races for a millennium, reappearing with great similarity in anthropological writing through the nineteenth century. Frederic Farrar provides an archetypal example in a discussion of Race:

Such are the tallow-colored Bosjesmen who, when not living on worms and pismires, are glad to squabble for the putrid carcase of the hyaena and the antelope; . . . the aborigines of Victoria, among whom new-born babes are, when convenient, killed and eaten by their parents and brothers; the Alforese of Ceram, who live in families in the trees; the Banaks, who wear lumps of fat meat ornamentally in the cartilage of the nose; . . . the pigmy Dokos, south of Abyssynia, whose nails are grown long, like vultures’ talons that they may dig up ants, and tear the skin of serpents, which they devour raw; the Veddahs of Ceylon, who have gutterals and grimaces instead of languages, who have no God, no notions of time or distance, no name for hours, days, and years, and who cannot count beyond five upon their fingers. Many tribes like these, in the lowest mud of barbarism, so far from having traditions or traces of preceding tribes, attribute their origin directly to lions (like the Sahos), to goats (like the Dangalis), or with contented unanimity to the ape, on whose deformed resemblance to themselves they look without

any particle of horror and repugnance, as on a type to which they are assimilated by their own abject degradation, fierce squalor, and protuberant jaws.⁶⁹

In this remarkable and repellent passage, Farrar follows the format of the *Marvels* fairly closely, listing names, locations, appearances and diets, but little else. We may also note that the list descends from dietary to moral to religious failings. These races, for Farrar, go from bad to worse. The ‘Bosjesmen’ eat animals we do not, but this is hardly as gross a transgression as that of the ‘aborigines’ who eat their own children. This moral monstrosity eventually gives way to physical monstrosity, and thus enter the familiar pygmies, staples of the medieval texts.⁷⁰ For the ‘modern anthropologist,’ the pygmies are not merely short people; rather, they approach the sort of hybridity common to the Anglo-Saxon’s monsters, having “vultures’ talons.” Still, even these part-animal, snake-eating marvels are not so horrifying for Farrar as the ‘Veddahs,’ who are utterly beyond the pale because they do not know God.

These ‘Veddahs’ recall rather sharply the naked men from Connacht described by Gerald of Wales who “knew nothing of Christ nor had they heard anything of him.”⁷¹ These physically normal people are for Farrar, as for Gerald, the most incomprehensible, the most appalling of all monstrosities. Farrar’s passage reads as if it were copied directly out of the Gerald’s *Topography of Ireland*. Farrar writes that these Veddahs have “no notions of time or distance, no name for hours, days, and years.”⁷² Gerald writes of the naked men that they did not know the names “of the year, or the month, or of the week. They were as yet deeply ignorant of the designation of the names of the days of the week.”⁷³ This resemblance is so strong that it is difficult to write it off as mere coincidence. Rather, it seems as if medieval discussions of monstrous races were direct inspirations for modern discussions of genuine human variety. Even more recently, in a ‘scientific’ discussion of human evolution, Raymond Dart describes our distant African ancestors, *Australopithecus Africanus*, as “carnivorous creatures that seized living quarries by violence, battered them to death, tore apart their broken bodies, dismembered them limb from limb, slaking their ravenous thirst with the hot blood of victims, and greedily devouring living writhing flesh.”⁷⁴ We have no evidence whatsoever that suggests any of the habits of these proto-human individuals, so Dart is here allowing his imagination free rein, and in doing so, falls back on the old, familiar patterns. As is often the case, it is the Other within—in this case within our own human past and genetic composition—who receives the most vociferous condemnation.

Chapter Five

Containment and Consumption

The fabulous monsters of the *Marvels of the East* are by no means harmless. Indeed, many are frightening and dangerous. The illuminators of these and other monstrous manuscripts—and the authors by whom their texts were written—have therefore taken certain steps to contain their threat. These creatures tend to arise not in the “privileged centers” of Jerusalem and Rome, discussed in Chapter One, but rather, in “infected zones, where all kinds of monstrosities are possible, and where a different man is born, an aberrant from the prototype who inhabits the center of things.”¹ This is particularly vital for the Anglo-Saxons who, unlike those living in Rome or even in Continental Europe, saw themselves as living at the edge, in a liminal zone where such things, perhaps unthinkable elsewhere, seemed rather more likely. In his discussion of the monstrous races which appear in the manuscripts of the *Marvels of the East* and elsewhere, John Friedman finds a connection between location and physical appearance, writing that “the peoples introduced to the West by Ctesias, Megasthenes, and Pliny . . . both in themselves and in their geographic location . . . were creatures of the extreme.”² Indeed, he continues, their “traditional placement at the world’s edges was closely related to their monstrousness.”³

As discussed in Part One, England was located at the very edge of the Anglo-Saxon world-view, and therefore at the edge of their notion of a divinely ordered universe. On the great thirteenth-century Hereford *Mappa-mundi*, England and Africa may be connected conceptually through the map’s arrangement in a series of concentric circles. I would now like to focus on a few key examples of the monsters of Africa which appear on this map as well as in the three illuminated Anglo-Saxon manuscripts of the *Marvels of the East*. In both contexts, many of the monsters and monstrous men are clearly labeled, sometimes redundantly. For the dogheaded man in the Tiberius manuscript, for example, the text tells us “similarly there *cynocephali*

are born, whom we call *conopoenas*, having the manes of horses, the teeth of a wild boar and the head of a dog. His breath is fire.”⁴ This Latin text is followed by an Anglo-Saxon translation which informs the reader, “similarly there are *healf hundingas* (half-dogs) that are called *conopoenas*.”⁵ In total, then, this manuscript tells us that we may call these monsters *cynocephali*, *conopoenas* (twice) and *healf hundingas*.

In his wonderfully embodied discussion of monsters, Michael Camille proposes the construction of “a canon of monsters . . . lists of the slimy, feathery, and scaly.”⁶ This effort, as Camille acknowledges, is one of nomination and therefore of control. Jacques Derrida elaborates by noting that “a monster is a species for which we do not have a name,” created through either “composition or hybridization of already known species.”⁷ However, he continues, “as soon as one perceives a monster in a monster, one begins to domesticate it.”⁸ In this manner, words help us to comprehend the natural world.⁹ For Michel Foucault, grouping individuals into categories with names is “a form of power which makes individuals subjects . . . subject to someone else by control and dependence.”¹⁰ The connection between naming and controlling would also have been familiar to any Anglo-Saxon who had read or listened to Genesis, in which Adam is given dominion over the animals through the process of naming them:

Then God led to there the beasts that he shaped of earth, and the birds of the air to Adam to see how he would name them. Then each of the beasts which live, just as Adam named them, so they are named. And Adam called all the beasts by their names, and all the birds and all the wild beasts.¹¹

In the *Hexateuch*, the accompanying image shows God standing before Adam, gesturing to a selection of animals that seem to await eagerly their nomination. (Fig. 5.1) God holds out a somewhat ambiguous object to Adam. Based on other images in the manuscript, it seems this may represent a scroll, rolled at both ends.¹² Perhaps the figure of God is passing this scroll, still blank, to Adam so that he may inscribe it with the names of the animals, producing a sort of zoological Domesday Book. This process of naming the animals is, through the passing of the scroll to Adam, directly associated with his dominion over them.

If to name is to control, then the Anglo-Saxon compiler of the Tiberius manuscript has done all he can to rein in the monstrous, fire-breathing *cynocephali*, (AKA *conopoenas*, AKA *healf hundingas*). For Julia Kristeva, defining the Other not only allows it to be controlled, but also to be “excluded, but in



Figure 5.1. London, British Library, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f. 6r, Adam Names the Animals, the *Hexateuch*. (By permission of the British Library.)

a strange fashion: not radically enough to allow for a secure differentiation between subject and object, and yet clear enough for a defensive *position* to be established.”¹³ That which is controlled and excluded is, for all intents and purposes, subjugated. Benjamin Disraeli’s declaration, cited above, that “race implies difference, difference implies superiority, and superiority leads to predominance,” seems to resurrect the unspoken desires of the Anglo-Saxon designers who created the images for the *Marvels* manuscripts.¹⁴ Such subjugation, such control and exclusion would have been a powerful means of dealing with the more aggressive members of the *Marvels of the East*.

I would now like to confront a few of these monsters face to face, as they are embodied in the images of the *Marvels of the East*. Appearing in the three manuscripts and the various world maps we find a curious headless man. (Fig. 5.2–5.4) This race, although identified as “blemee” on the Hereford *Mappamundi*, is not named in the Vitellius or Bodley manuscripts, or even in the Tiberius manuscript, which had provided multiple names for the *cynocephali*.¹⁵ They are, however, identified by location: “And there is another island in the Brixonte toward the south in which there are men born without heads.”¹⁶ This is followed by a very cursory physical description of the *blemmye*.¹⁷ “They have eyes and a mouth in their chest. They are eight feet tall and in a similar manner eight feet wide.”¹⁸

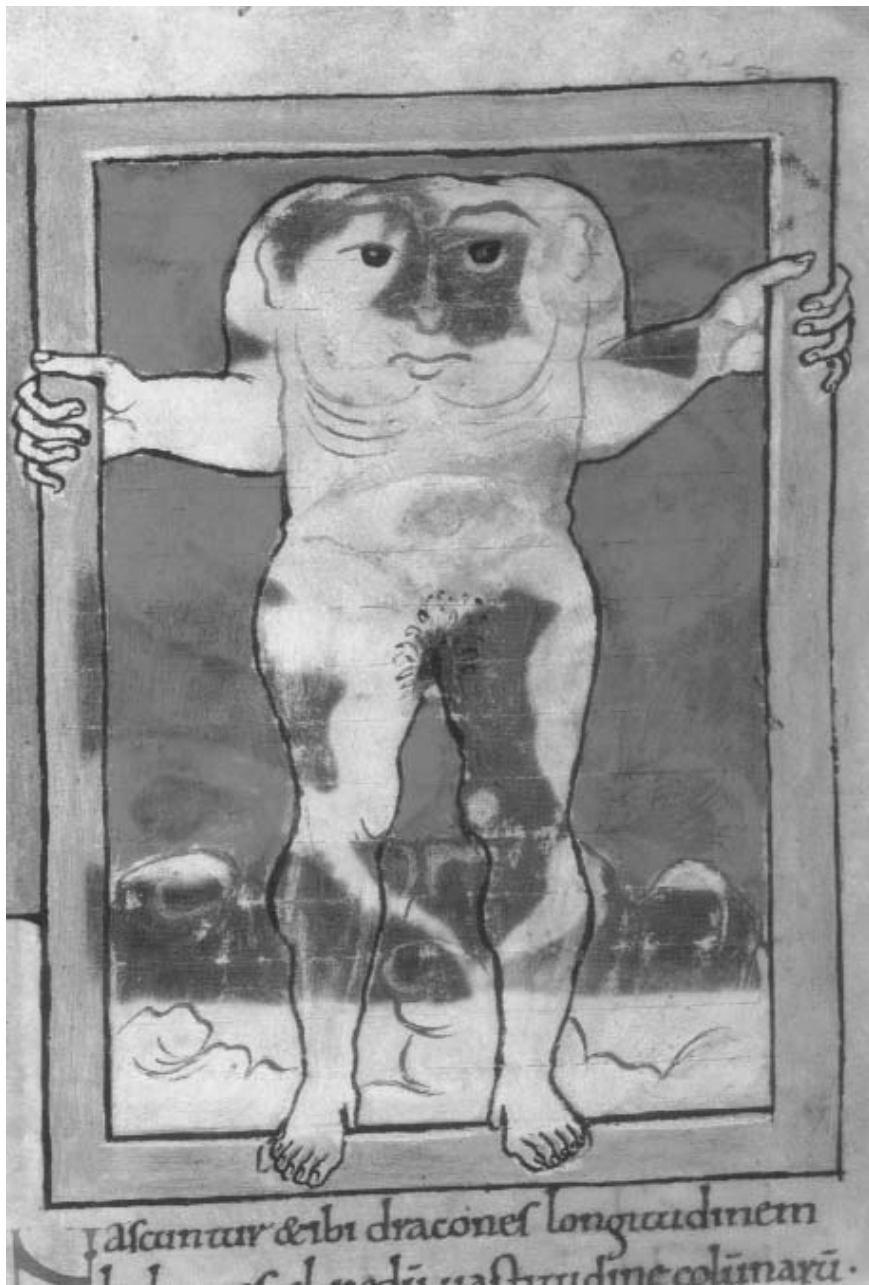


Figure 5.3. London, British Library, B.v Tiberius B.v, f. 82r, Blemmye, *Marvels of the East*. (By permission of the British Library.)

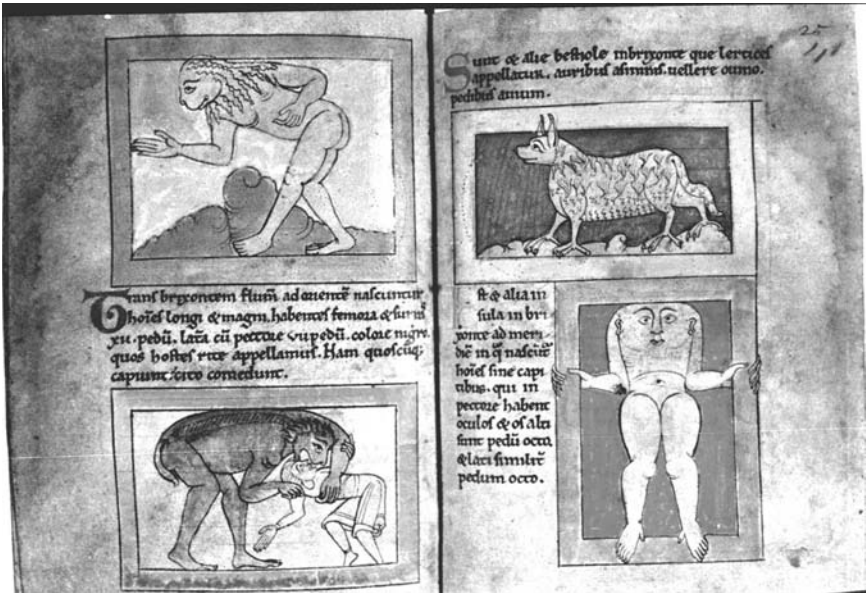


Figure 5.4. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 614, f. 40-41r, Enemies and Blemmye, *Marvels of the East*. (By permission of the Bodleian Library, the University of Oxford.)



Figure 5.5. London, British Library, Add. 62925, f. 87v, Blemmye, Rutland Psalter. (By permission of the British Library.)

What was the appeal of such an odd creature? Why does he appear in *Marvels* and maps and even in the margins of unrelated texts, such as the famous Rutland Psalter, of around 1250? (Fig. 5.5) Kristeva argues that abject objects, vile and wretched things evoke a “fascinated start that leads me toward and separates me from them.”¹⁹ In his detailed study of the powers of disgust, William Miller offers a similar observation:

Even as the disgusting repels, it rarely does so without also capturing our attention. It imposes itself upon us. We find it hard not to sneak a second look or, less voluntarily, we find our eyes doing “double-takes” at the very things that disgust us.²⁰

Disgust must always repel in some sense or it is not disgust. Repulsion, however, might bring in its train affects that work to move one closer again to what one just backed away from. These affects could range from curiosity, to fascination, to a desire to mingle. Repulsion can also raise resentment for having been repelled and a consequent desire to reclaim lost territory. And that too draws one forward again . . . Something makes us look at the bloody auto accident, thrill to movies of horror, gore, and violence . . . Is there no moral offensiveness that doesn't by some dark process elicit fascination, if in no other way than in the horror, wonderment, and befuddlement such depravity evokes?²¹

Charles Baudelaire gives this notion poetic grace in his “A Carrion,” in which a rotting corpse by the side of the road on a hot day is “clamorous with foul ecstasy . . . Blooming with the richness of a flower.”²² This revolting image compels Baudelaire's gaze, as the *blemmye* arrests mine. But what might have rendered these curious, perhaps amusing images of headless men disgusting or abject to their medieval viewers? As Miller notes, while disgust takes the form of a bodily reaction, it can nonetheless be deeply rooted in a moral objection. Indeed, he links deformity, very much in evidence with our *blemmye*, with immorality. “Disgust,” he writes, “ranges more widely than we may wish, for it judges ugliness and deformity to be moral offenses. It knows no distinction between the moral and the aesthetic.”²³ We may wish to distance ourselves from this offensive notion, but medieval viewers would, by and large, have made no such effort, for they made a direct connection between deformity and sin. As Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe argues in her excellent discussion of “Body and Law in Late Anglo-Saxon England,” the

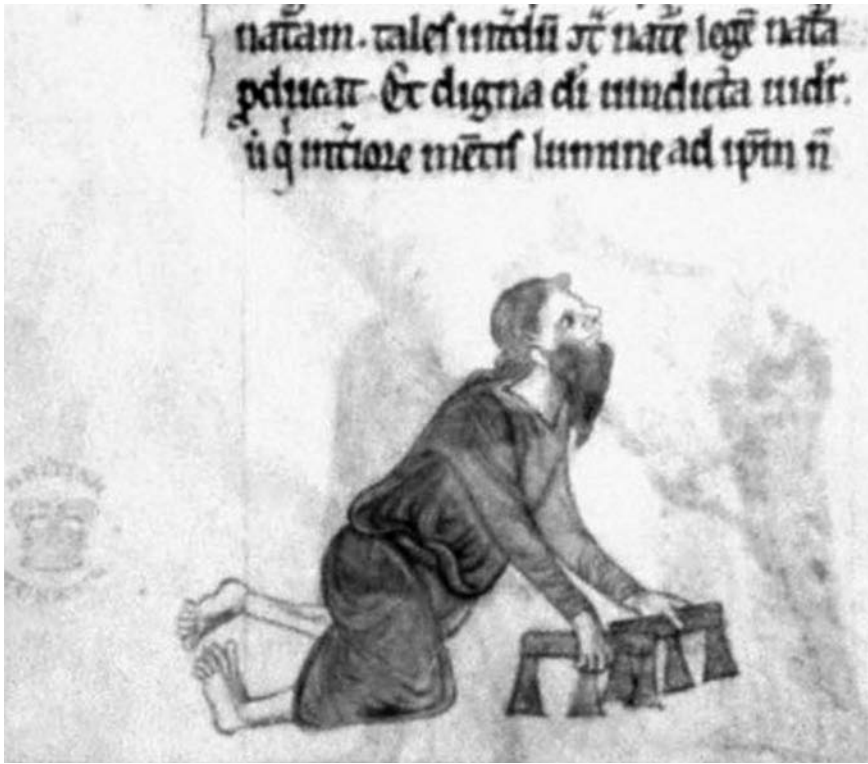


Figure 5.6. London, British Library, Royal 13. B.viii, f. 30v, Deformed Man, Gerald of Wales's *Topography of Ireland*. (By permission of the British Library.)

body was consciously used as a legible sign for guilt, which was the end result of sin.²⁴ In his account of *The Topography of Ireland*, Gerald of Wales deems deformities to be common in Ireland as a direct result of the character of its people:

Nor is it marvelous if nature produces such people, against the laws of nature, on account of an adulterous race, an incestuous race, a race of illegitimate birth and conception, a race outside the law, foully ravishing nature herself with hateful and hostile craft.²⁵

An illuminated manuscript of this text even provides an image so that its readers may see a genuine deformed Irishman, whom they are then to personally condemn as wicked.²⁶ (Fig. 5.6) Although we could imagine particularly wicked, evil-looking deformed people without the image, this pictorial

representation seems sympathetic enough, with the man gazing calmly, perhaps mournfully upward from his kneeling position. His right foot is wrenched painfully backward (recalling the *antipodes* of the *Liber Monstrorum* and *Bestiary*) and his left leg seems atrophied, withered from disuse.²⁷ This is not a generalized image of moral failing, but a specific, well-observed depiction of genuine human deformity. And, in looking at this image, we are encouraged by Gerald to feel moral repulsion for this unfortunate figure. Gerald tells us that “it seems a deserving vengeance of God, that those who do not reflect on the same with the interior light of the mind ought to suffer, in being deprived of the favor of that light which is exterior and bodily.”²⁸

Like Gerald’s semi-mythic Ireland, the *Marvels of the East* “is crammed with bodies transfigured and deformed.”²⁹ The *Marvels* were, as noted above, based on Greek texts, written in a context in which the ugly members of society were considered blameworthy for their state.³⁰ By examining Anglo-Saxon texts, we can see that body was, for them, no general assemblage of parts, but a very precisely defined entity. In an Anglo-Saxon *Handbook for a Confessor*, for example, there are specific instructions for confessing sins not only for eyes and ears and mouths, but also “for skin and for flesh, and for bone and for sinew, and for veins and for gristle, and for tongue and for lips, and for gums and for teeth, and for hair and for marrow, and for anything soft or hard, wet or dry.”³¹ Despite our modern biological understanding that the body is divided into musculature, bones and ligaments, the circulatory system, and so on, it is nonetheless difficult to imagine one of these parts sinning, while the others remain uninvolved. But for the Anglo-Saxons, to speak generally of “sins of the flesh” was not adequate.

The result of conviction for a serious crime in Anglo-Saxon England was generally bodily mutilation. However, this was not necessarily done as a form of punishment, though of course it would serve as such, nonetheless. Rather, it was evidentiary. Guilt was manifest, visible and legible on the body, through mutilation:³² “To view those eyeless, noseless faces, those scalpless heads, arms without hands, legs without feet is to read upon their bodies the legal exactment of punishment for crimes.”³³ These bodies, for all their deep-seated corporeality, were still texts to be read, sometimes quite literally. Two priests convicted of theft and adultery were actually branded on their foreheads with their crimes (i.e. “This is a profane adulterer.”).³⁴ Here, we need no metaphors to convey the notion of a legible body.³⁵

Returning to the *blemmye*, we are able to read in his most severe bodily mutilation, his decapitation, the mark of deep-seated moral failing. The

exact nature of his crime is not relevant, nor is its location to flesh, bone or gristle. In a society that would cut the nose from a thief, the appearance of a man whose head has been removed, not by a potentially fallible legal system but by the perfect God who formed him, would be the very definition of the disgusting.³⁶ If we prefer to read his state as diseased rather than mutilated, we are still on sound footing for moral contempt. As Michael Goodich notes, “physical disease such as leprosy could be regarded as the outward manifestation of inner sinfulness and likened to heresy in its pernicious effects. Such demonization led to the exclusion of lepers from civil society.”³⁷

Since the *blemmye* might have been seen as morally abject in the Anglo-Saxon world, he would need to be contained. As stated above, the *blemmye* is not named in any of the three *Marvels* texts. A name could have provided an element of containment, of Derrida’s ‘domestication,’ without which these nameless creatures—like the title monster of *The Thing* (1951)—retain the full measure of their monstrosity.³⁸ For Friedman, this quality is manifested as a tension in the images and texts of the *Liber Monstrorum* and *Marvels*, a “demonic energy . . . about the monstrous races, making them ever ready to burst into the world of the western Europeans.”³⁹ On the Hereford *Mappamundi*, this energy is allowed greater rein. While the majority of the monsters, including the *blemmye*, are neatly contained within their boxes at the southern edge of the world, a handful have broken out and are straying toward Europe. Just beyond the restraining boundary of the Nile we find a centaur-like faun, a sphinx, and a creature that looks like the mythical unicorn, but is labeled *rinosceros*.⁴⁰ (See Chapter 1, Fig. 1.1) Half way across the map, at the eastern extreme, we find the fleet-footed *sciopod*, shading himself from the sun as he does in the *Marvels*. (Fig. 5.7–5.8) Continuing counterclockwise around the map we find, not far to the east of England, a pair of cannibals known as *essedones* grimly undertaking to “eat the corpses of their parents in solemn feasting, thinking this better than letting them be consumed by worms.”⁴¹ (Fig. 5.9) They sit on small rock piles, with the dismembered head and limbs, presumably of a dead parent, between them as they commence their feast, which recalls Dart’s description of his cannibalistic *Australopithecus*, cited above. These figures are certainly revolting according to medieval English norms of conduct, not merely eating human flesh, but the very flesh that produced them. The limbs seem freshly hacked and raw, as blood drips from their stumps. However, I believe that they would be in some sense disgusting even without these gory details. They could be offensive to the English simply by virtue of their location. As Miller observes, something perfectly harmless can easily become disgusting if it is out of place. In his example, borrowed from Charles Darwin, soup in a bowl can be



Figure 5.7. Hereford World Map, Detail of Sciopod. (By permission of the Dean and Chapter of Hereford and the Hereford Mappa Mundi Trust.)

perfectly appetizing, but the same soup, dripping though a man's beard, is nauseating.⁴² This is hard to deny. It seems, based on the logical construction of the *Mappamundi* and *Marvels*, and of the divinely ordered world they represent, that the monstrous races have a proper place, which is far from England. The *essedones*, *sciopod* and sphinx, are disgusting in their transgression of boundaries, and the closer to they come to the British Isles, the more alarming they become.

Like the wandering monsters on the Hereford *Mappamundi*, the *blemmyes* of the Tiberius and Bodley manuscripts seem ready to burst out of their frames and off their pages, into the world of their readers. They grip their frames with long, highly prehensile fingers like prisoners in cells, but these bars are too far apart to restrain their giant bodies. Their feet have thumbs as well, turning them into extra hands with which they seem to grip the lower

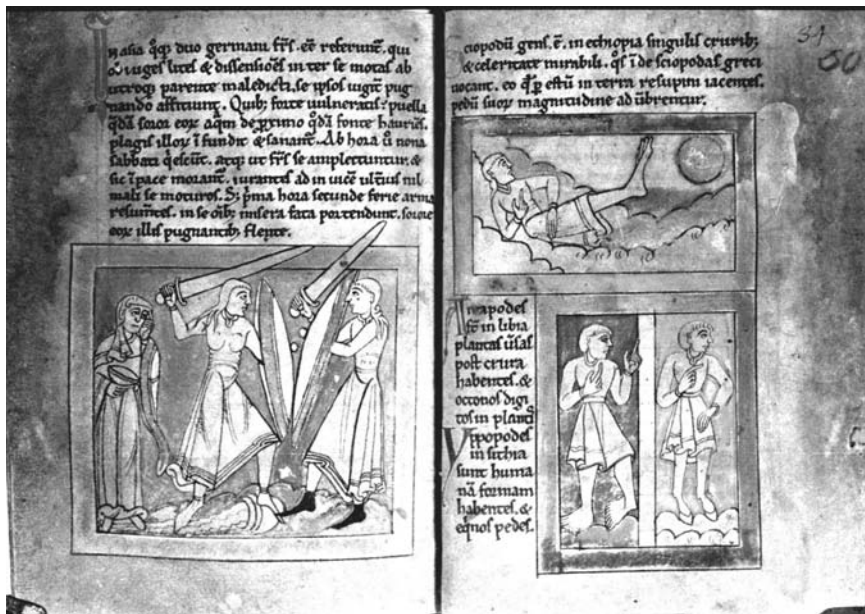


Figure 5.8. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 614, f. 50r, Sciopod, *Marvels of the East*. (By permission of the Bodleian Library, the University of Oxford.)

edge of their frames, poising them to spring forward. To understand this situation fully, we must look briefly at the role of the frame in Anglo-Saxon art. Gameson writes that the frame in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, “like a type-writer bell, announced that the end of the ‘line’ was approaching, while still allowing room for manoeuvre.”⁴³ Frames were flexible, allowing for movement back and forth between the image and the text block but also between the fictive space of the image and the real space of the reader. A lively image of the Battle against Sodom and Gomorrah in the *Hexateuch* provides a good example of interaction between image and text block. (Fig. 5.10) In the upper right hand corner, a spear-bearer whose head and arm overlap the frame, thrusts his slender spear through the word *burgun* (cities). This image depicts the battle between Sodom and Gomorrah—just as the cities are torn apart by the battle, so too, the very word “cities” is impaled. The frame is also frequently absorbed into the plane of the image so that “the distinction between the space occupied by the image and the plane of the frame became virtually non-existent.”⁴⁴ It is this conflation that allows the *blemmye* not only to cross the frame but to actively grip it in the process.

Exactly what moment is being depicted in this literal, ostensibly non-narrative image? In general, the monsters of the *Marvels* are shown enacting

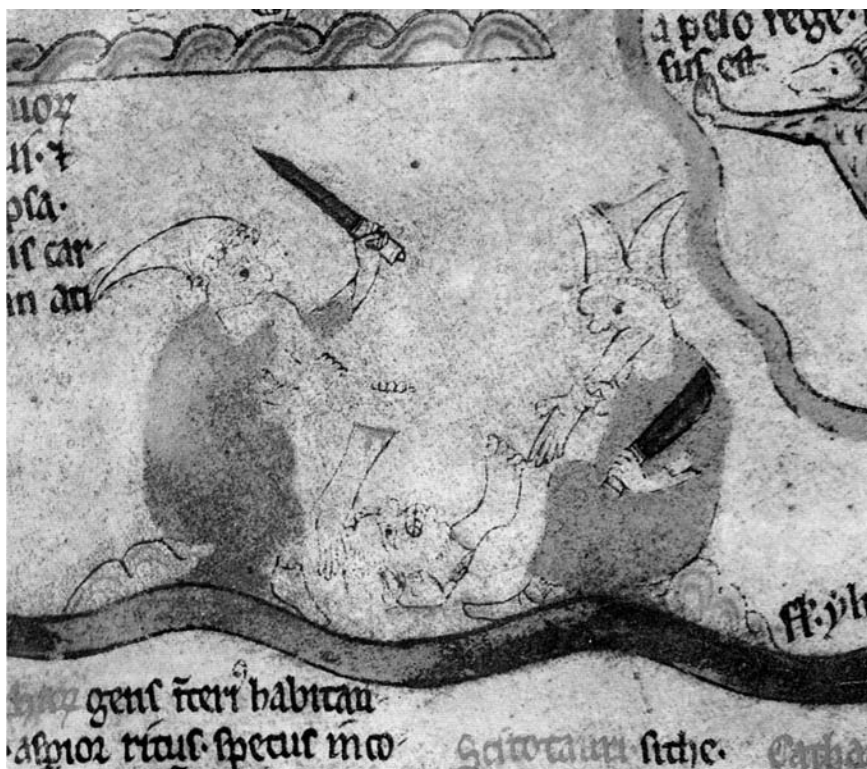


Figure 5.9. Hereford World Map, Detail of Cannibalistic Essedones. (By permission of the Dean and Chapter of Hereford and the Hereford Mappa Mundi Trust.)

their most typical behaviors, like the animals in a modern zoological taxonomy. For example, the *homodubii* are described as follows: “In another region there are found people six feet tall. They have beards to the knee and hair to the heel. They are called *homodubii* and they eat raw fish.”⁴⁵ The Bodley image is as literal as it could be. (Fig. 5.11) We see a man who is actually six of his own feet tall, with his beard touching his knee and his hair curving around his heel. And he is most certainly about to eat a raw fish. His name, *homodubii* may denote “man of doubt,” which could explain the expression on his face as he attempts to eat whole and head-first a fish far too large for his mouth. It seems that the illuminator’s skepticism has infected his subject. Regardless, the text provides a description and an action, which the illuminator illustrates rigorously. On the other hand, the text for the *blemmye* does not provide any sort of action. It tells us where they live, what they look like (in the most general of terms) and how big they are. The action, therefore,

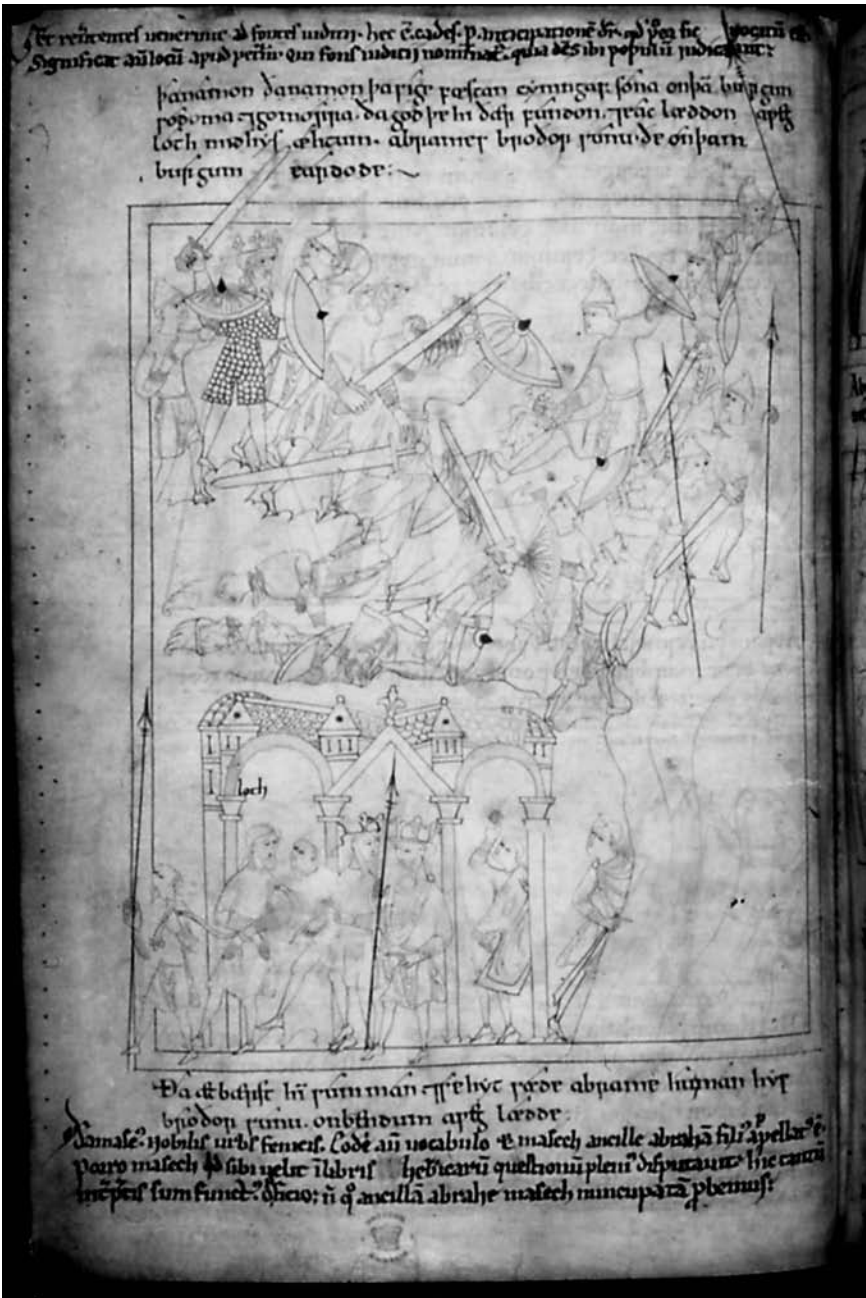


Figure 5.10. London, British Library, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f. 24v, Battle against Sodom and Gomorrah, the *Hexateuch*. (By permission of the British Library.)

was up to the illuminators to invent, and in all three manuscripts, they have turned the *blemmyes* toward the reader, endowing them with a sense of forward motion. Perhaps they are poised tensely between their world, “south of the Brixontem River” in Africa, and England, the world of their readers. On the other hand, perhaps they are standing firmly in both places at once. According to Gameson, “by focusing on a turning point in a story, one image could illustrate the transition between two immediately consecutive moments.”⁴⁶ If this is the case, what is the ‘story’? Are the *blemmyes* coming into our space, and if so, what is their intent? If they are, could they possibly harm us? Friedman has written that “one of the most important characteristics of the Anglo-Saxon [*Marvels*] texts and their illustrations is that the races are seen in some sort of relationship to the viewer.”⁴⁷ Proceeding through the pocket-sized Bodley manuscript, just over four by five inches, we have the opportunity to observe a broad array of wondrous creatures, but we do so with a sense of security because they, but for a single exception, never look back at us. This is particularly important for such a small manuscript, in that the lack of confrontation allows the reader to hold the manuscript fearlessly, right up to his nose to observe more carefully the small images and minuscule text. The physicality of this interaction challenges the viewer’s notions of distance, bringing in close that which rightly belongs at a great distance. However, some of the first sixteen monstrous races seem to go to great lengths to avoid any eye contact. (See Fig. 5.11) The next twenty-one do likewise, most particularly the *pantoii* who not only avoid looking at us but are known to gather up their long ears and flee if approached by humans.⁴⁸ (Fig. 5.12) In the middle of this generally non-confrontational experience, reading and looking with the manuscript held close before our eyes, we come across the single figure who gazes directly out at us: the *blemmye*. Of course, in each of the three *Marvels of the East* manuscripts, the context is somewhat different. They were made over the course of three centuries and yet in each of the *Marvels*, the *blemmye* is the first and only monster to gaze directly out of the page at his viewer. This is particularly noteworthy in an Anglo-Saxon context where few figures other than Christ ever make eye contact with the viewer. For example, in all two-hundred-and-thirty surviving feet of the Bayeux Tapestry, there appear only three directly frontal figures: King Harold and Archbishops Stigant and Odo.

How do headless men face us? The images of the *blemmyes* provide them with full faces in their chests. Turning to the textual descriptions of the *blemmyes*, however, we find that they only reference two facial features, the eyes and the mouth. In the Latin text of Tiberius, we are told that “they have eyes and a mouth in their chest,” and in the Anglo-Saxon text, “they have upon their

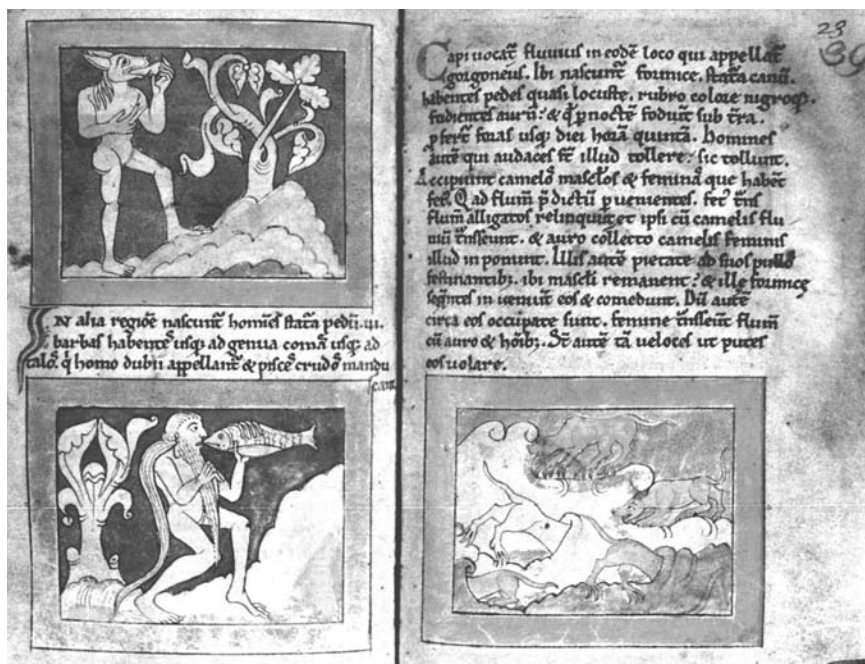


Figure 5.11. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 614, f. 38v, Homodubi, Cynocephalus and Ants as Big as Dogs, *Marvels of the East*. (By permission of the Bodleian Library, the University of Oxford.)

breasts their eyes and mouth.”⁴⁹ In the texts, it is only the organs of sight and consumption which merit mention, two organs closely linked by their capacity to absorb natural phenomena. We do not generally speak of consuming smells, sounds or tactile sensations in the manner that we speak of consuming images. Given this context, the headless man’s stare seems fraught with significance. He seems as interested in consuming our image as we are in consuming his.

The *blemye*’s features are not merely sunk onto his chest; they are also enlarged. His ears reach almost to his shoulders and his eyebrows span his entire chest. The effect produced by this enlargement is somewhat unsettling, especially as it seems to enhance the directly confrontational nature of the image. The face, with its look of mild disapproval, seems to pop out of the page, to extend beyond the frame on which the *blemye* treads. In photographic terms, the image seems to combine the long shot and the close-up, giving us a full view of the monster’s naked body, but also pushing its face



Figure 5.12. London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius B.v, f. 83v, Donestre and Pantoii, *Marvels of the East*. (By permission of the British Library.)

toward ours, intensifying this already startling optical confrontation. Its eyes are likewise enlarged, as they stare directly, eternally unblinking, at us.

In addition to the eyes, the *blemmyes* are generously granted noses and ears, as well. As Susan Kim asserts, “in representing the *absence* of the head, the illustrator has exactly *presented* the head. The representation of the monster’s *difference*, in the illustration, outlines its *sameness*, its recognizability not as a monster, but as a man.”⁵⁰ I would further argue that this familiarity is a necessary component in the *blemmye*’s ability to disgust: If, as Miller notes, “our bodies and our souls are the prime generators of the disgusting,” then this estranged re-presentation of our own form would be more alarming, more loathsome and therefore more compelling, for a human reader.⁵¹ Recalling Frederic Farrar’s racist diatribe cited above, he cannot understand how any human could look on the ‘deformed resemblance’ of an ape without utter disgust.⁵² Likewise, it is their similarity to us that renders the *blemmyes* utterly repellent.

CONSUMPTION

As discussed above, physical deformity was read as a legible sign for guilt. Looking at the *blemmye* in the Bodley manuscript in an effort to deduce his moral failing, we may take note of his huge size (recall that he stands eight feet tall and eight feet wide), his oversized, grasping hands, and the location of his face in his chest and belly. He seems an embodiment of physicality, bereft of any intellect. In his seminal essay on human evolution, Alfred Wallace concludes that man is separated from the beasts by his “wonderfully developed brain, the organ of the mind, which now, even in his lowest examples, raises him far above the highest brutes.”⁵³ This brain makes possible not only “the art of making weapons, division of labor [and] anticipation of the future” but also the “restraint of the appetites,” which is so significantly missing in the *blemmye*.⁵⁴ Wallace speaks of the brain ‘raising’ man above his physical body. Mikhail Bakhtin describes the reverse-process: “degradation, that is, the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal.”⁵⁵ The result of this process is a close relative of Miller’s disgust: the grotesque. Indeed, the *blemmyes* seem to be a literalization of this notion, as their heads, the seat of the spiritual, have sunk down into their fleshy bodies. The *blemmye* is a man who has become a purely physical body, a material entity, whose eyes in his chest are, to borrow from Leonardo Da Vinci, windows only to the body. Like the knife-wounds and bullet-holes described by Miller, they are passages into the “muck” which forms our insides.⁵⁶ Lower down on his gut, the seat of materiality, he has a distinctly emphasized belly-button. The notion of the “navel” plays an important role in medieval concepts of the universe. Jerusalem, the all-important focus of the divinely ordered world, was described as the “navel of the world” in Ezekiel 38:12, a passage that discusses Jerusalem in connection with a crusading attitude about retaking the city from the monstrous Gog and Magog.

Bearing in mind the connection between vision and consumption, this belly-button looks rather like a third eye. This eye is literally located in the gut, where Miller locates the seat of disgust, equating sight with revolting appetite, and so the *blemmye*’s wide-eyed stare becomes an act of ocular consumption.⁵⁷ The viewer of this manuscript has, by the time he reaches the confrontational *blemmye*, already read forty folios and filled his belly full of monsters through his metaphorical *ruminatio*, the method by which reading was turned into a gastronomic process of mental chewing and digestion. Turning to the Tiberius manuscript, the *blemmye* may also be graced with an abdominal eye, now paler but larger, stretched to encompass his entire stomach. As these images confront

us directly through eye-contact, they draw our attention to our own viewing process and then connect this process with consumption, in its literal and figurative senses. We are left to wonder if this *blemmye* is reciprocating, ruminating on us with his third belly-eye, digesting us as we digest him.⁵⁸

If further support is needed for the connection between vision and consumption in the *Marvels of the East*, we can turn to two other images in the Tiberius manuscript. (Fig. 5.12–5.13) In a much more narrative ‘marvel,’ we are told that the *donestre* address foreigners, using:

the names of their parents and the names of their relatives, coaxing them with speech in order to deceive them and kill them. And when they have seized them, they kill them and eat them, and afterwards they seize the head of the same man which they have eaten and weep over it.⁵⁹

In Cohen’s insightful analysis, the victim is incorporated into the body of the *donestre*, becoming a constituent part of this hybrid half-human creature and thereby commingling his flesh with that of his consumer. In this image, at the moment of physical consumption, the lower half of the *donestre*’s head is transformed into a beast’s muzzle.⁶⁰ Still, even in this moment of bestial ferocity, the *donestre* locks his consumptive gaze on the body he is currently ingesting. The *donestre* eats the entire body of his human meal, but leaves behind the head, over which he mourns, resulting either from a strange moment of confusion between subject and object (he has just eaten himself, as he has now literally in-corporated the man’s body by putting it into his own), or from the guilt which plagues him, now that he has returned to his more human physiognomy.

The earliest image we have of the *donestre*, that in Vitellius, is rather different from the later pair. (Fig. 5.14) This image has garnered virtually no discussion beyond that of Susan Kim, who primarily focuses on gender conflict, here.⁶¹ The *donestre* is holding aloft a human leg and foot. A close look reveals that the severed leg is actually the lower half of the woman’s left leg, which has been torn off. This is, no doubt, why she looks so upset. For medieval people, as Caroline Bynum notes, the body was more often a site for violence, suffering and death than for sexual concerns.⁶² She is faced with her imminent consumption, piece by piece. This is a model of homophobia very different from those we see in Tiberius and Bodley, where the victim is eaten as a whole, not in pieces torn off, like the drumsticks of a Thanksgiving turkey. The woman is, at the time her foot is consumed, very much alive and aware of the process but unable to escape. Of severed limbs, Miller notes,



Figure 5.13. London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius B.v, f. 81v, Enemies, *Marvels of the East*. (By permission of the British Library.)



Figure 5.14. London, British Library, Cotton Vitellius A.xv, f. 103v, Donestre, *Marvels of the East*. (From *The Electronic Beowulf*, edited by Kevin Kiernan, and used with permission of the British Library Board.)

“there are few things that are more unnerving and disgust evoking than our partibility.”⁶³ We are frightened and disgusted by the sight of the severed limbs of others. How much greater must be the horror of watching a semi-human monster consume one’s own limbs, one by one? This is the situation presented by the illuminator of Vitellius, who challenges his audience to become aware of the ‘partibility’ of their own bodies. In this context, the crimson background of this gory image seems to intensify the violence within its frame.

This image, chronologically one of the earliest under consideration, seems rather closely connected to a visual detail on the Hereford *Mappa-mundi*, the latest work I discuss. (See Fig. 5.9) The *essedones*, the parent-eating cannibals mentioned above, resemble the Vitellius *donestre*. Both hold up unmistakably human limbs for consumption. They differ in that the *essedones* are entirely human, if not necessarily humane, and, unlike the *donestre*, they do not have to eat humans to become human, as do the *donestre* of Tiberius. Rather, they begin as human as the parents who sired them and now constitute their grisly meal. In this image, the cannibals wear formless, sack-like robes which conceal their bodies entirely except their hands, feet and heads, significantly the very same portions of the dismembered parent which lie between them. By covering the rest of their bodies in this manner, the illuminator seems to be emphasizing the connection between consumer and consumed who are, most evidently, made of the same parts. We might ask whether the *donestre* and the *essedones* conjure fears of contamination or of consumption, but there really is little difference, since that which is eaten becomes incorporated into the body which eats; either way, the observer is at risk of becoming that which he detests, by way of contamination or incorporation.

Our interaction with the *blemmye*, more reciprocal than that of the man with the *donestre*, likewise serves to collapse the chasm between subject and object, between consumer and consumed and therefore between man and monster. If, as the old saying goes, ‘you are what you eat,’ then as consumers of and ruminators on the marvelous races, we are as likely to ingest and incorporate their monstrousness as they are to absorb our humanity. And yet, it seems more likely that we will be degraded by this contact than that they will be elevated by it: As it has been elegantly phrased, “a teaspoon of sewage will spoil a barrel of wine, but a teaspoon of wine will do nothing for a barrel of sewage.”⁶⁴

Facing the *blemmye* across the gutter of the Bodley manuscript is a very similar image of a creature that crouches in his confining frame to bite at the head of his human victim. (See Fig. 5.13) Unlike the *donestre*, these creatures,

which the text informs us “we rightly call enemies,” are more straightforward: “For whomsoever they seize they quickly devour.”⁶⁵ Here, he grasps his victim around the chest and by the shoulder as he leans into him. The man in turn clasps the monster’s arm, not in any clear sign of rejection, but rather, in a gesture which might be mistaken for tenderness. Indeed, were it not for the gaping position of the monster’s notably toothless mouth, this might be mistaken for a scene of cross-species romance. Their mouths are drawing closer while the man looks up with his wide eye, into the gullet of the monster, down the path he knows he will soon traverse. Again, ocularity seems central. This is more an image of sight and of touch than of taste. This, perhaps, is logically explained by our inherent desire to identify with the human rather than with the homophagic monster. Sight is therefore our only link to the process of his—or our—consumption by the monster.

Returning to the *blemmye*, I would argue that, like the other monsters just discussed, his transgressive nature does not stop with his transitional location. For Camille, “the monster, being unstable, crosses boundaries between human and nonhuman, mingling the appropriate and inappropriate, showing itself in constantly novel and unexpected ways.”⁶⁶ For Augustine, too, the monsters existed to show themselves, as he proves linguistically, through a series of puns:

And to us the monsters, signs, portents, prodigies, as they are named, ought to demonstrate, ought to signify and portend and prophesy that God is going to do with the bodies of men what he foretold he was able to do, with no difficulty to impede him, with no laws of nature dictating to him.⁶⁷

Whereas Augustine connects *monstra* with *monstrare*, linguistically linking monsters with *demonstration*, Isidore instead connects it with *monere*, ‘to warn.’ Both imply the ability of God to use phenomena to prove his powers and to influence human affairs. If, indeed, a monster is either “that which shows,” for Augustine or “that which warns,” for Isidore, if it is, in Jeffrey Cohen’s words, “a morally and physically deformed creature arriving to demarcate the boundary beyond which lies the unintelligible, the inhuman,” then why are the *blemmyes* so resolutely proceeding across that boundary?⁶⁸ These monsters, and many others, were not so much monstrous beasts as monstrous humans. They were able to bridge the divide between monstrosity and humanity, between Africa and Europe, because they have elements of both human and monster in

their physical construction. Perhaps this is why the semi-human Grendel is a fascinating and enduring cultural icon, who has virtually eclipsed the far more bestial dragon that ultimately kills Beowulf. If monsters like Grendel and the *blemmye* are, at least in part, human, then they may function to represent, in Scott Westrem's words, the "dangerous element already lurking in the European social fabric."⁶⁹ In their liminal state of being, they could serve double-duty, embodying in monstrous flesh both the threat from without and the threat from within.

Chapter Six

Monstrous Sin and Salvation

Michael Camille notes that “the monster is a material creature, a creation.”¹ But whose creation? Certainly, insofar as they were believed to exist literally at the other end of the world, they are God’s; on the other hand these painted images are human creations, medieval Frankenstein’s monsters cobbled together out of various parts of various known creatures. Their hybridity is an essential component of both their monstrosity and their “continued popularity, usefulness, and appeal.”² Indeed, the physical bodies of these monsters, the skin on which they are written and the inks in which they are painted, were no less violently hybrid in their constitution.

Camille cites the dangers of “viewing images as incarnations rather than representations,” but in a way that is exactly what I am arguing we ought to do.³ These manuscripts enact the marvel of “incarnation,” that is, the putting on of flesh. As manuscripts are literally made out of bodies, composed of the flesh of animals and written with inks frequently containing human fluids, these monsters from afar are here incarnated. Through this process, the human illuminators have become a parody of God. Like Dr. Frankenstein, they created men, but distorted and malformed men. They created monsters.

This leaf from a manuscript of Wulfstan’s law codes is crudely stitched together, leaving a scar which, for modern viewers, brings to mind Boris Karloff, and which, for medieval viewers might have reflected the bodily punishments the manuscript describes.⁴ (Fig. 6.1) Essentially, every manuscript may be seen as “a relic of bodily pain, desire, and death. We should not forget . . . that books were also produced from bodies.”⁵ The vellum pages are the skins of animals, while the inks and colors often include human spit and urine.⁶ The bodily nature of manuscripts, somewhat foreign to modern readers raised with wood-pulp pages, was by no means unfamiliar to

Anglo-Saxons, as we can see by examining one of the riddles of the *Exeter Book*:

A certain fiend robbed me of my life,
deprived me of my world-strength; then he wet me,
drowned me in water; he pulled me from there,
set me in the sun, there I was deprived of
all the hair that I had. Then, a cruel knife's edge cut me;
[I was] ground down with cinders,
fingers folded [me], and a bird's pride
spread useful-drops over me, journeyed abundantly
ran over [my] surface; it sucked up wood-dye,
spreading streams, it stepped again on me,
it journeyed leaving black tracks. Then the man defended me
with protecting-boards, covered me with hide
adorned me with gold; I was therefore ornamented
by the wondrous work of smiths, girded with wire.
Now, ornaments and this red dye,
and now this glory-place far and wide celebrates
the Protector of the people, not the wound-pains.⁷

This is, of course, an account of the construction of a manuscript which, estranged through the poetry of the riddler, reveals itself as it truly is, as the skin of a beast, ripped from its flesh, written on with a bird's feather and covered with a new hide. Each element is reanimated so that the vellum may speak of the violence enacted upon it and the quill may journey, run and suck. The emphasis in this poem is on the life of the parts, the animals from which the manuscript has been assembled and the violence of this process. Returning to the *blemmyes*, we find that their skin, so human in tone, is not a painted color, but simply the real skin of which the page is made. (See Chapter Five, Fig. 5.2–5.4)

This riddle transforms the manuscript into a hybrid creature, though one dedicated to spreading the gospel. Perhaps this might recall the heavenly hybrids of the gospels, the winged beasts of Ezekiel's vision, each of whom dictates the text to its favored evangelist. There are numerous examples, but a particularly lively set may be found in an eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon Gospel Book now in Monte Cassino.⁸ The ox of Luke is here doubly hybrid, bearing an ox's head and a bird's (or angel's?) wings attached to a human torso. This sacred creature turns to its right, to gaze across the manuscript's gutter at Luke, seated on the facing folio. As a good scribe, he holds his quill

in one hand and his pen-knife, which he may use to sharpen his quill but also to “erase” mistakes, in the other. The winged ox-man holds a scroll, and points to it with his right hand, dictating the Gospel to Luke. With this creature as its source, is it any surprise that the text itself, which begins directly beneath it, has likewise been invaded with monstrous life, its opening letter drawn with a monstrous head atop and a dragon at the base?

These evangelist symbols, like the monstrous races of the *Marvels*, are composed of “unfailingly disturbing hybrid bodies.”⁹ Could an audience familiar with the dog-headed *cynocephalus* and the feline-headed *donestre* (See Chapter 5, Fig. 5.11 and 5.12) view these animal-headed, bird-winged men without recalling such monsters? On the other hand, surely Gospel books were far more common than *Marvels* texts. Perhaps the question ought stand reversed: Could an audience raised on images of the hybrid symbols of the evangelists view the *Marvels* without recalling, on some level, a note of sanctity?

These bodies, divine and monstrous, contain no elements unknown in Anglo-Saxon England. Even the most outlandish are, when closely examined, no more than an assemblage of familiar bits and pieces, as we can see in the *lertice*, who has “ass’s ears, sheep’s wool and bird’s feet.”¹⁰ (See Chapter 5, Fig. 5.4) These parts were not always fixed in their relations to one another, and so on occasion one race may, through literary or artistic alteration, become another.¹¹ This mutability—conjoined with their hyper-hybridity—was an essential component of their monstrosity. The *cynocephalus*, for Cohen, is monstrous precisely “because of its hybridity. Human and canine affects freely play across its species-mingling flesh, marking it as alien. Miscegenation made corporeal, he has no secure place in a Christian identity structure generated around a technology of exclusion.”¹² (See Chapter 5, Fig. 5.11) For Kristeva, the very definition of the abject is that which “does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite.”¹³ The very text of the *Marvels* may be seen as hybrid in its nature. In Vitellius and Tiberius, the Old English texts are formed in Latin characters. The result is a written fusion of two linguistic systems. This hybridity is heightened by the retention of a few runic characters, used to convey sounds not found in Latin. For example, in the passage describing the *lertice* cited above, “*donne*” begins with the runic ‘eth,’ a letter indicating the dental spirant we approximate with ‘th’ in Modern English.

Certainly, the *cynocephalus* with his dog’s head and human body and the familiar centaur with its human trunk and equine lower half are distinctly constructed, composite bodies.¹⁴ (See Chapter 5, Fig. 5.2) But the *blemmye* is not in possession of any parts other than human. (See Chapter 5, Fig. 5.2–5.4) Rather, he is missing a vital part—his head.¹⁵ He is therefore

not so much a constructed body as a deconstructed body, recalling the Anglo-Saxon law codes cited above. If, as O’Keeffe asserts, viewing dismembered and mutilated bodies is tantamount to seeing the sinful nature of the souls therein contained, how then are we to read the removal of the whole head?¹⁶ Certainly, the monster’s crimes must be weighty. Nevertheless, perhaps there is hope left for the headless *blemmye*. Aelthred’s legal code of 1008, compiled by the famous monastic reformer Wulfstan, is noteworthy as the first to suggest that punishment for crimes ought stop short of killing the convicts so that they might live long enough to save their souls.¹⁷ This code, written not long before the first of the three extant illuminated Anglo-Saxon *Marvels of the East* manuscripts was created, turns punishment into a means to salvation. Another of Wulfstan’s codes elaborates as follows:

The guilty needing to be punished should, indeed, though diverse ways—requiring to be proved and not requiring to be killed immediately, but through punishments—be saved, in order that their spirits, for which the Lord himself has suffered, not be destroyed in eternal punishment. Some with chains and scourges; others, moreover, should be forced to suffer hunger and cold; likewise others ought suffer disgrace foully, losing skin, hair and beard at the same time; others, still should be constrained more severely, that is, they may lose a member, namely an eye or nose, a hand or foot, or others some other member.¹⁸

Such punishments were considered merciful alternatives to death, for “thus may one punish and also save the soul.”¹⁹ In this context, since the *blemmyes* are still alive, there remains hope for their salvation. Perhaps it seems logical, then, to encounter an account of an attempt to convert them. A forged chronicle claiming to be by Saint Augustine of Hippo recounts his efforts in Ethiopia, where he is reported to have preached to the *blemmyes* and cyclops.²⁰ While not explicitly stated in the text, it seems possible that, had Augustine been successful, the *blemmyes* might at the moment of their conversion have sprouted heads onto which their faces could then migrate. If they could be restored to God in spirit, they ought then be restored in body. Indeed, this is not inconsistent with notions expressed in genuine works by Augustine. In his discussion of monsters in *The City of God*, cited above, Augustine connects monsters to salvation. The “bodies of men” referred to above are the bodies of the dead, which it is said God will resurrect at the Last Judgment.²¹ Therefore, for Augustine, monsters become signs for the Resurrection. In this manner, monsters and miracles are united as manifestations of the infinite power of God.²²

HOLY MONSTERS

Of course, it is not only monsters who have their heads removed in Anglo-Saxon England. Saints seem likewise prone to this disorder. There are a number of headless saints in the Anglo-Saxon canon, but a single example will suffice to connect monstrosity and sanctity. Ælfric translated into Anglo-Saxon an account of the martyrdom of Saint Edmund, King of East Anglia in the ninth century. Known for his holiness, Edmund was the unfortunate victim of a series of attacks by the Danes in 870. After having been captured and riddled with arrows that failed to kill him, Edmund was decapitated. His head was left in the woods by the Danes. His followers sought him, and found that:

It was a great miracle that a wolf was sent through God's guidance to defend that head day and night against other wild animals. They went out then looking and frequently called out, just as is the custom of those who often go into the woods: "Where are you now, companion?" And that head answered them, saying "here, here, here" as often as any of them called, until they all came, on account of its calling to them. Then the grey wolf who watched over the head lay with his two feet embracing that head, greedy and hungry, but on account of God, he did not dare to taste the head. Instead, he kept it from wild animals. Then they were astonished at the wolf's shepherding and they carried that saintly head home with them, thanking the Almighty for all his miracles.²³

The saint is made headless, like the monsters, but his head—able to speak after being severed from its body—is then protected by a ravenous wolf, an animal associated with violence and death through the trope of the Beasts of Battle.²⁴ Why do saints and monsters share this common ground? As Kristeva writes, "the abject is edged with the sublime."²⁵ Literally, on the Hereford *Mappamundi* and the Tiberius B.v. Map, the English are 'edged' with the monsters of Africa. This zone, which Kristeva might describe as "a land of oblivion that is constantly remembered," is the realm of the abject, the disgusting.²⁶ If the monsters might be said to live "at civilization's periphery," this is also where the Anglo-Saxons found themselves, beyond the pale, in the margins of the world, surrounded by monsters.²⁷

* * *

Gillian Overing and Clare Lees have observed that periods tend to define themselves through a process of "dependent differentiation," defining themselves

against others.²⁸ This “definition by means of difference” was, they argue, particularly important for the Anglo-Saxons.²⁹ The Anglo-Saxons certainly formed extreme opinions about their new neighbors. From the earliest of Anglo-Saxon writings, we can note a vitriolic tone of disgust with regard to the native Britons whom Gildas considered to be “stiff in the neck and mind . . . rebel[ing] now against God, sometimes against its citizens, sometimes even against kings and their subjects from across the seas.”³⁰ He describes them as “diabolical monsters” with “features remaining stiff, faces remaining savage.”³¹ Gildas’s writings, to which Bede turned for information on the earliest days of Anglo-Saxon history, clearly convey a bitter disgust with all things British. Bede similarly “emphasized the identity of the English people more intensively by the moral judgments that he passed upon the other peoples of the island when he reviewed ‘the whole state of Britain’ in his final chapter.”³² For Miller, “our very core, our soul, is hemmed in by barriers of disgust.”³³ For Kristeva, our “lives are based on exclusion.”³⁴ To some degree, societies are defined by their disgust. It sets their boundaries. Gildas, in defining who the Anglo-Saxons were, looked first and foremost to the Britons, in order to determine who the Anglo-Saxons were *not*. Somehow, the ‘devilish monstrosities’ of the Britons were not disparate enough for Anglo-Saxon authors and illuminators. In their anxieties of self-definition, they invented and reproduced a whole host of monsters against which they might define their human identities. For Friedman, the monstrous races render their observer’s culture as central, as the norm from which they differ.³⁵ In this manner, as Camille writes, “the centre is . . . dependent upon the margins for its continued existence.”³⁶

Why did the Anglo-Saxons feel such a great need for disparate Others who would allow them to see themselves as paragons of normality? Why is it that all three of the extant illustrated manuscripts of the *Marvels of the East* were produced and preserved in England? We might wish to assume or speculate that there once were illustrated versions on the continent, but the survival of three in England and not one for the rest of Europe points toward a particular English interest in the content of these monster books. Perhaps, as has been suggested above, this was the result of their unique location, outside the boundaries of Europe, separated from the Continent by “a ring of ocean, maintaining, it is said, an uncrossable circuit on all sides.”³⁷ This location, in the medieval Christian world-view, placed the Anglo-Saxons far from the most sacred sites of the divinely ordered universe. In his discussion of the disgust felt for the lower classes of England in the modern era, Miller concludes that this sentiment has its origins not in the upper classes who, in the words of George Orwell, felt nothing more than “sniggering superiority,” but

rather, in the middle classes who felt themselves to be much closer to the lower classes.³⁸ This feeling led to an exaggerated disgust, a need to make the distinctions between middle and lower more stark than they were in reality. Perhaps the Anglo-Saxons, at the edge of the world, felt that they were too close to the monsters or the monstrous and thus they focused on these Others with a greater intensity than is found in the more 'central' areas of the medieval world. As Susan Kim writes:

The position of the artist/scribe parallels with that of the monsters, because the Christian tradition inhabits the existing pagan structures, but also because by speaking from this Romanised perspective, he must define himself as being 'at the far end of the earth,' that is, as being in a similar position to the monsters.³⁹

In his discussion of the *donestre*, Cohen also finds a connection between the Anglo-Saxons and the monsters they represented:

Anglo-Saxon England is not so very different from the Donestre by whom it was fascinated: familiar and strange, hybrid rather than homogenous, an amalgamative body that absorbs difference without completely reducing or assimilating it.⁴⁰

Nathaniel Gates, in his *Racial Classification and History*, observes that 'race' is a symbolic system, not a reality, even for genuine people rather than the mythical Others discussed here.⁴¹ For Gates, 'race' is an ideological belief, a means of differentiation, estrangement and exclusion, not simply a representation of reality. In Anglo-Saxon and early Anglo-Norman England, the monstrous beings were first defined racially and then circumscribed geographically so that they were doubly marginalized. Still, these marvels at the other end of the world were not the only monstrous beings of concern. There were others closer at hand, living in the forests and fens of the British Isles and inhabiting the margins of manuscripts, who continued to press on the walls of English culture, serving to aid in the constant redefinition and clarification of the English identity.

Part Three

Lexical Spaces as Battlegrounds

Chapter Seven

Monstrous Nature

From its very title, *THEM!*, one of the more famous and fabulous horror films of the 1950s, establishes an absolute, dichotomous world view in which ‘WE’—the humans—are forever pitted against ‘THEM’—the monsters.¹ The boundary which separates us from them seems crystal-clear. We the audience, along with James Whitmore and Edmund Gwenn, are positioned as noble humans, created by God, struggling against what the film’s advertising posters referred to as “a horror horde of crawl-and-crush giants clawing out of the earth from mile-deep catacombs!” For the Anglo-Saxons and Anglo-Normans, the world was not so simple, not so black-and-white. Their world contained a broad array of monsters, but the line which separated them from the humans by whom they were depicted and against whom they are pitted often grew blurred.

On world maps and in manuscripts of the *Marvels of the East*, the monsters are generally at the other end of the world, though the Hereford map shows that many stray around the border, stretching all the way to Britain. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that monsters were believed to exist within the British Isles, as well. Medieval English artists and authors clearly believed that all manner of monsters were living in the margins of the world. They also saw England as eminently marginal. It was therefore only logical for them to assume that their own lands would be filled with monsters not identical but analogous to those found in the *Marvels*. Britain’s own past was deeply monstrous, filled with tales of giants as its first inhabitants, but texts and images show that monsters were still lingering in Britain’s forests and fens, just outside town and monastery walls, forever threatening to burst apart the “door . . . firm with forged bar” that separated them from their human counterparts.² These creatures are omnipresent in manuscript initials from the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries, in which men and monsters, entangled in surprisingly violent foliage, mingle and merge until the boundaries that

once separated them have been all but lost. Certainly, similar images do appear on the Continent, especially for the later portions of the period, when England was part of the Norman 'empire,' but differing contexts make for differing meanings, and so I will restrict my discussion to English images.

There have been several seminal studies on the role of illuminated initials in this period.³ Scholars have attributed many functions to embellished letters. They may contain pictorial narratives which "attempt to translate the content of the text to which they are joined into visual form," and may also serve as commentaries on the text.⁴ They have been variously considered as pure ornamentation, mnemonic devices to jog the memory, or as markers denoting textual divisions.⁵ In more elaborate cases, such as the Book of Kells or the Lindisfarne Gospels, they may also work "to fetishize the writing of this text, and to impress upon the reader/viewer, emotionally even more than intellectually, the awesome mystery, the divine power and authority of writing."⁶ For Meyer Schapiro, the exuberance of many initials was the result of:

a new sphere of artistic creation without religious content and imbued with values of spontaneity, individual fantasy, delight in color and movement and the expression of feeling that anticipate modern art . . . it is unreligious and an example of a pagan life-attitude . . . sign of a pagan attitude of spontaneous enjoyment and curiosity about the world.⁷

Conversely, for J. J. G. Alexander, the spread of Christianity—which emphasized revelation through the writings of the evangelists—thrust greater importance onto the appearance of the text than it had previously held in Roman, oral-focused literature, so that the embellishment and decoration of manuscripts was a considered pious act.⁸

Asser's ninth-century *Life of Alfred* provides insight into one role of textual decoration. The Anglo-Saxon text contains an account of a book of English poetry owned by the protagonist's mother who used its beautiful ornamentation as an incentive for her children to pay attention to their studies, promising the manuscript to the first to learn its contents. The future King Alfred was "enticed by the beauty of the initial letters of that book" and thus dedicated himself to the study of its text, eventually winning the prize.⁹ In order for this passage to have resonated with meaning, Asser's readers must have understood the attraction of such initials. Looking at a similarly embellished manuscript from the period, it is easy to understand the young prince's desire. (Fig. 7.1) This *Lives of Saints* contains a number of initials,



Figure 7.1. Paris, Bibl. Nat., lat. 10861, f. 2r, Monstrous Initial. (By permission of Bibliothèque nationale de France.)

the largest of which introduces the *Life of Saint Philip*.¹⁰ Here, Philip's name is entirely infiltrated with life. The bow of the 'P' encloses a monkey wearing a long, curved hat. In addition to this central figure, there are several animal and human heads, some of which also wear curved hats. These beast-heads—which emerge from the letterforms, their traces, and the interlace that fills the large 'P'—serve to embellish the text, but do not illustrate it. Still, as with the initials described in the *Life of Alfred*, these images may have served not to distract from reading, as Bernard of Clairvaux was subsequently to contend, but rather, to encourage it.¹¹

I believe it reasonable to conclude that all these explanations are plausible. As with most aspects of early medieval art, initial letters were

multivalent signs, designed in a contemplative monastic context in order to resonate throughout the slow process of *ruminatio*. We must therefore not dismiss even the most whimsical and seemingly inexplicable examples as mere “drôlerie.”¹² This term has been used to imply an insignificance, an unplanned nature for these images; these notions are both improbable. We must remember that the values of their creators were not identical with ours. Our inability to imagine the use of an image does not mean it has none. Indeed, there are numerous medieval records that confirm the high value placed on the book arts, suggesting that scribes, illuminators and bookbinders were held in high esteem for their crafts. Particularly before and just after the Conquest, there is evidence of considerable regard for the manual labor of creating books. Bishop Osmund of Salisbury, for example, in 1078, “did not think it beneath his dignity to write, bind and illuminate books.”¹³ Monastic crafts were important enough for abbots as well as monastic bishops to continue scribal work after their appointments.¹⁴ This was possible because the work of the scribe and illuminator was considered to be part of the *opus Dei*, the work of God. While engaged in the task, he assumes the role of the *beatus vir*, as depicted the opening initial of the eleventh-century Bury Psalter.¹⁵ (Fig. 7.2) Indeed, an Old English poem refers to Christ himself as “craftsman and king.”¹⁶ As Laura Kendrick asserts, Insular culture seems to have placed a particularly high value on elaborately decorated initials, and as a result many were retrospectively attributed to abbots, bishops, and saints.¹⁷ The Book of Durrow and the Cathach of St. Columba, for example, have both been connected with Saint Columba, and the Barbarini Gospels with Huigbald, Abbot of Lindisfarne.¹⁸ This trend is, perhaps, connected with the common medieval perception of the Evangelists not as authors, in the modern sense, but “perfect scribes,” transmitting the text provided to them by the Holy Spirit in the form of their tetramorphs.¹⁹

A number of miracle stories further emphasize the value placed on scribes and their products. In the ninth-century, Æthelwulf gives an account of an early eighth-century Irish scribe named Ultan “who was able to decorate books with adorned letters, and he thus rendered their appearance singularly delightful by this art, so that it is not possible for a modern scribe to equal him.”²⁰ Lawrence Nees has argued against this interpretation, saying that the key phrase, “*notis ornare libellos*,” just means that he wrote in an attractive script, and that we cannot infer from this that they valued illuminations.²¹ However, the strong praise heaped on Ultan, as well as the verb “ornare” (to ornament) suggests that some sort of illumination is implied. Ultan’s act is also described in the text with the verb “pingere,” which, while



Figure 7.2. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Auct. E. inf. 1, f. 2r, Beatus Vir Initial with David Writing and Playing the Harp. (By permission of the Bodleian Library, the University of Oxford.)

the source of our “to paint” in this period could refer to either painting or writing.²² This overlap of terminology is, I think, instructive. It suggests that, for medieval bookmakers, the two acts were not as separate as we would now consider them. This would be particularly true in the early Middle Ages, when scribes frequently illuminated their own texts. Mildred Budny expands

on this notion in her discussion of interlace, which seems to straddle the divide between text and image in that, although it does not necessarily form letters, its creation “closely corresponds to the writing of script, which uses a small repertoire of strokes of a few different shapes and lengths to build up an alphabet.”²³

The actual hand with which Ultan crafted his letters was, according to his legend, exhumed and then involved in a miracle of healing.²⁴ A few centuries later, Gerald of Wales provides a similar account. In this instance, the scribe is instructed by an angel to copy a divine manuscript, filled with marvelous images which are “so delicate and subtle, so tightly spaced and pressed together, so full of knots and bound together with bands, and still so fresh in colors,” that they seem “to have been composed by angels, rather than through earnest human effort.”²⁵ This description is reminiscent of the masterpieces of early Insular illumination, particularly the Book of Kells, although there is no need to assume any direct connection. Even to modern eyes, such works of startling, almost microscopic intricacy are difficult to associate with human efforts.

HOSTILE NATURE

It has been acknowledged that Anglo-Saxon literature displays an unfamiliar hostility toward the natural world, with landscapes routinely described as grim and unfriendly.²⁶ As Fred Robinson writes, “for the modern man or woman schooled in Rousseau and Wordsworth, it is sometimes hard to realize that nature was not always regarded as the beneficent entity envisioned by the Romantics.”²⁷ Indeed, the texts and images which survive from medieval England suggest that “nature is malevolent and chaotic.”²⁸ Ælfric noted around the turn of the eleventh-century that, after the fall, “dragons and serpents were harmful” to man, a threat which we have reason to believe his contemporaries would have felt still hanging over them.²⁹ Indeed, the entry for 793 in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, actually recorded in around 1100 in the Canterbury recension, tells us that “in this year, there were dreadful signs [in the sky] above Northumbria, after which the people were pulled into misery. Then there were huge whirlwinds and flashes of lightning, and fiery dragons were seen flying in the sky.”³⁰ These dragons are merely one manifestation of the dangers of nature which, as might be expected in this period, are generally thrust outward, to the marginal zones within Britain.

Of course, because Britain as a whole was associated with the edges of the world, configured as the Desert, Anglo-Saxon monks were readily able to

see themselves following in the footsteps of John the Baptist, the *vox clamantis in desertum* ("voice crying in the wilderness").³¹ Bede turned the image of a hostile environment into a monstrous world by describing the establishment of a monastery by Cedd as a fulfillment of Isaiah 35:7: "In the nest, in which first lived dragons, reeds and rushes may arise."³² Manuscripts throughout the period show traces of a fascination with dragons. The tenth-century Junius Psalter, for example, is overflowing with them.³³ They emerge from as well constitute the very letters of this vital text, which was the centerpiece of monastic life. The small dragons bite and claw at one another, at other strange, frequently avian creatures (Fig. 7.3) and even at the text, itself. (See Introduction, Fig. 2) They are, despite their small size, fearsome, sharp-toothed, bug-eyed beasts which, on account of their relative uniformity throughout the manuscript, cannot be seen as serving mnemonic purposes or as literal or commentary illustrations.³⁴ Can we therefore associate these monsters with a general 'beautification' of the sacred text, of the sort which inspired the young Alfred to study his letters? Would these beasts, with their gnashing teeth and lolling tongues have been considered 'beautiful' by their monastic audience?³⁵ (Fig. 7.4) Perhaps, instead, they served as a constant reminder of the chaos and violence of the world. In the nearly silent context of an Anglo-Saxon monastery, these creatures, many of which have their gaping mouths wide open, could be imagined to produce a great visual noise, a violent cacophony of mute screams and roars which were essential components of the monstrous.

On the other hand, we must remember that these manuscripts were designed for monastic contemplation, for that intense mental chewing known as *ruminatio*. In a sense, these frightful creatures might therefore be seen as models for monastic readers. The Winchcombe Psalter, created about a century later, is similarly filled with formidable monsters that have the temerity to lick at the text of the Psalter (Fig. 7.5) and to clamp their jaws firmly on its letters.³⁶ (See Fig. 7.9) In this manuscript, however, beasts are more regularly intermixed with human and divine figures. An initial 'D,' beginning *Domine* (Lord), for example, contains within its broad bow the Lamb of Christ, complete with halo and cross-staff.³⁷ (Fig. 7.6) In addition to the dragons and the holy lamb, we also find men who contort their bodies into geometric patterns while supplicating themselves to the text before them. (Fig. 7.7) The last type of initial in this remarkable manuscript is composed of foliate forms which seem as animate, as threatening and violent as the dragons. David Williams notes that these varieties of initial are present, in various forms, throughout the Middle Ages:

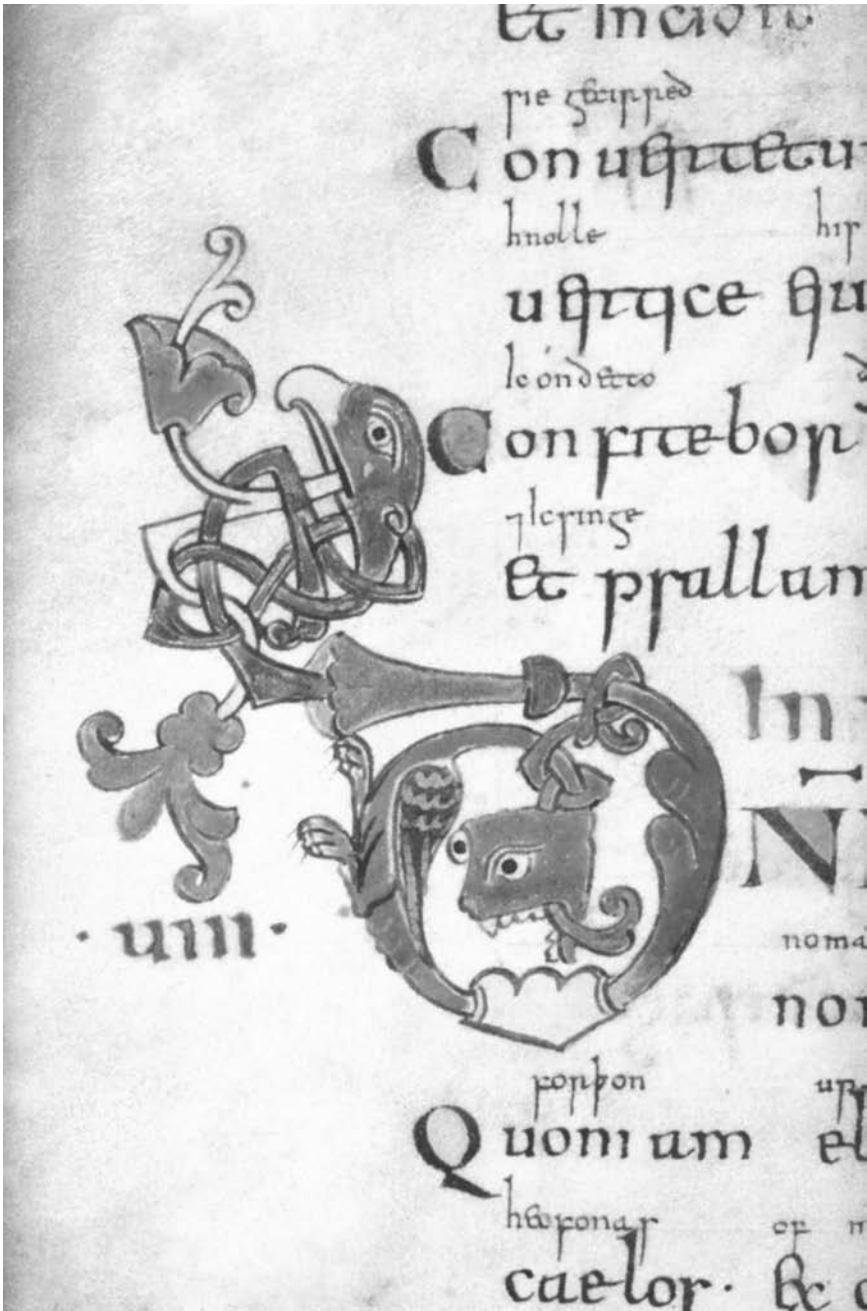


Figure 7.4. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 27, f. 13v, Monstrous Initial, the Junius Psalter. (By permission of the Bodleian Library, the University of Oxford.)

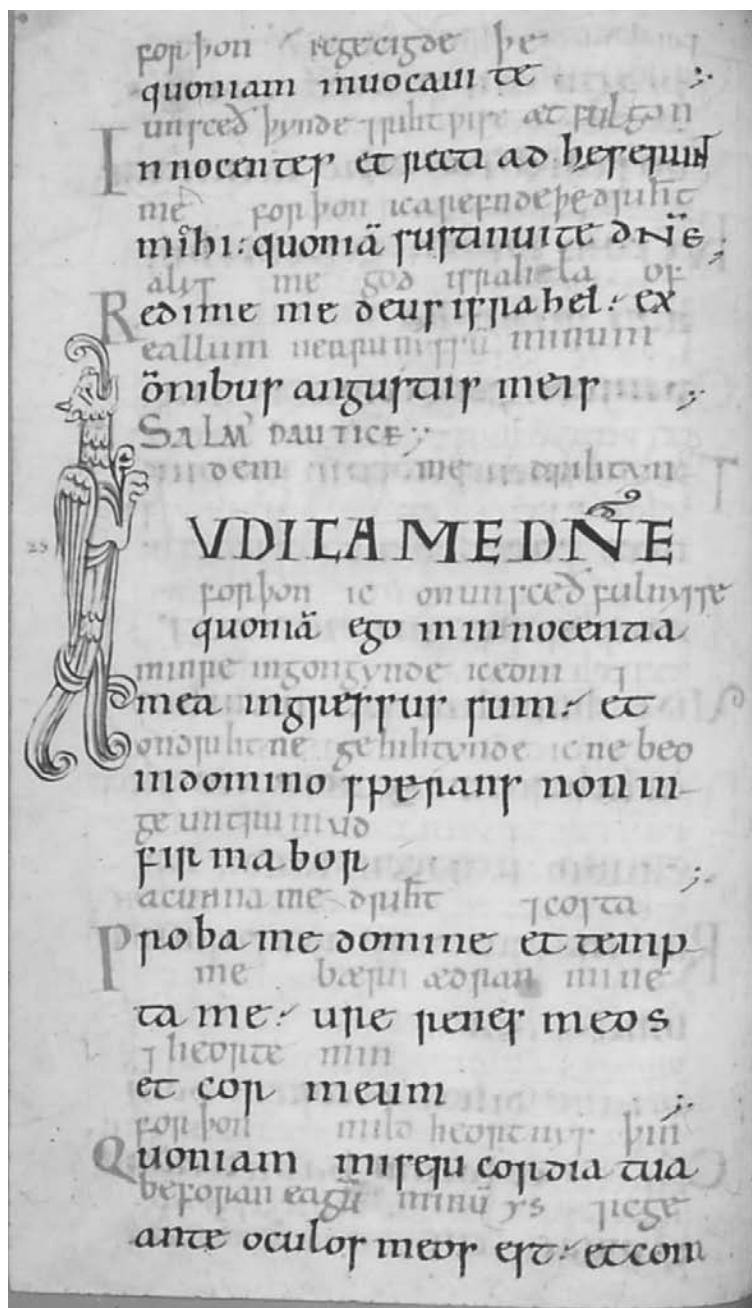


Figure 7.5. Cambridge, University Library MS Ff. I. 23, f. 40v, Monstrous Initial, the Winchcombe Psalter. (By permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.)

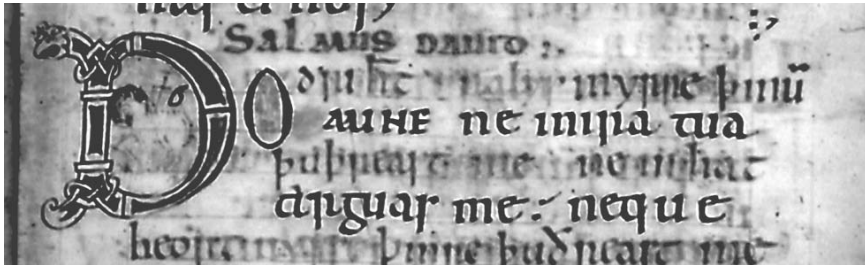


Figure 7.6. Cambridge, University Library MS Ff. I. 23, f. 10r, Lamb Initial, the Winchcombe Psalter. (By permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.)

The practice of constructing letters of the alphabet out of the forms of plant, animal, or human parts was widespread in the Middle Ages. Such a practice suggests, in the first place, a view of letters and thus of writing and, further still, of discourse as a whole as having some ontological character; thus the abstract forms that these letters are given in the Roman alphabet are distorted into forms derived from animate reality. These representations are inevitably grotesque, the transmogrification of animal to letter, letter to animal, and when they employ the human body, they are often erotic. The grotesque alphabet is an incarnate monster, a putting of flesh on abstraction.³⁸

These animated letters have such visual potency that even modern art historians cannot help but occasionally grant them not merely motion, but intentionality as well. J. J. G. Alexander, for example, writes that the “humans, birds, and animals which before were entangled in the Romanesque interwoven space of the initial scroll, gradually freed themselves and escaped into the borders.”³⁹

In the Winchcombe Psalter, monster, man and plant are all granted this type of agency. Forming the ‘A’ which begins Psalm 27, we find three tendrils emanating from a sprig of foliage. (Fig. 7.8) They reach forward to grab the second leg of the ‘A,’ which has been given the form of a staff or column, also crowned with foliage. The tendrils seem active, willful as they grasp the diagonal leg. The following Psalm also begins with an ‘A,’ but now its first leg is formed by a winged dragon which grasps the bar of the second leg of the letter in his jaws. (Fig. 7.9) These two images, viewed in succession, are almost identical but for the fact that one is composed of plant elements and the next of a monster. The curl of the dragon’s tail mimics the swirl at the base of the plant. Its wing is in the same position and general shape as the upper leaf of

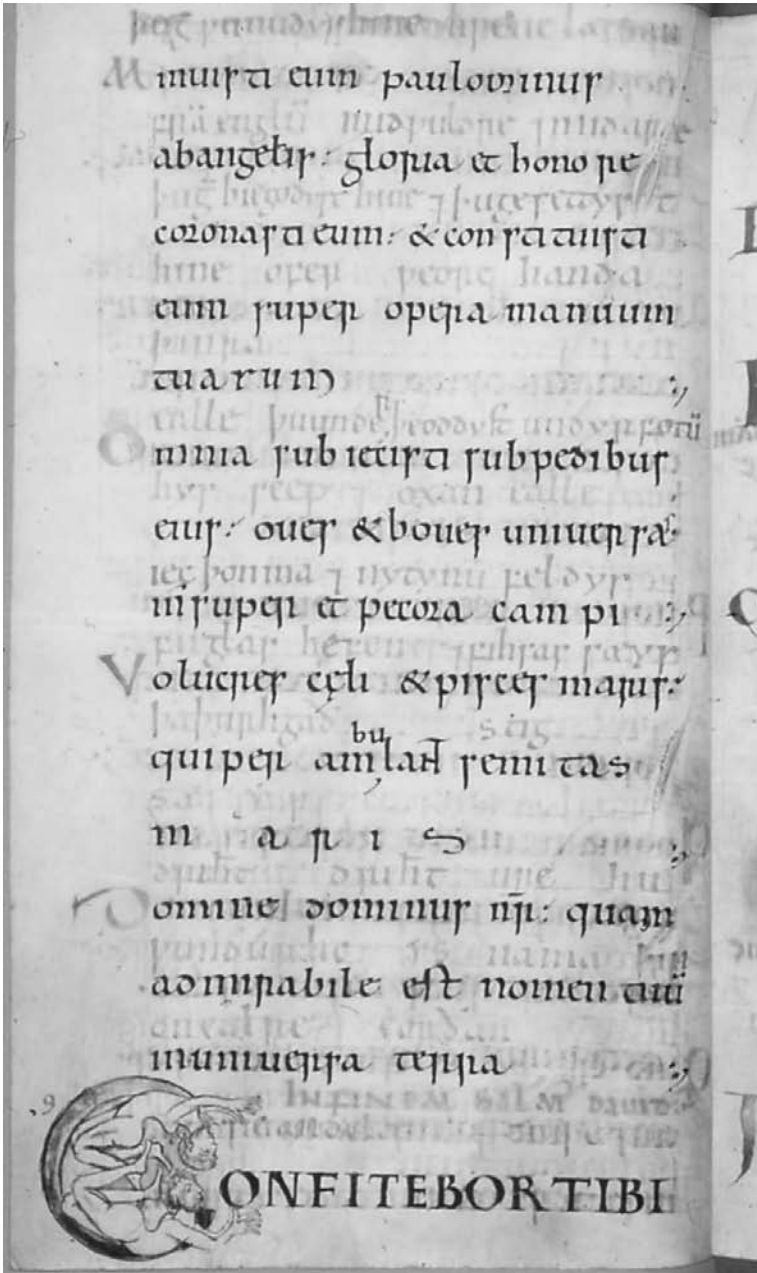


Figure 7.7. Cambridge, University Library MS Ff. I. 23, f. 13v, Contorted Human Initial, the Winchcombe Psalter. (By permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.)

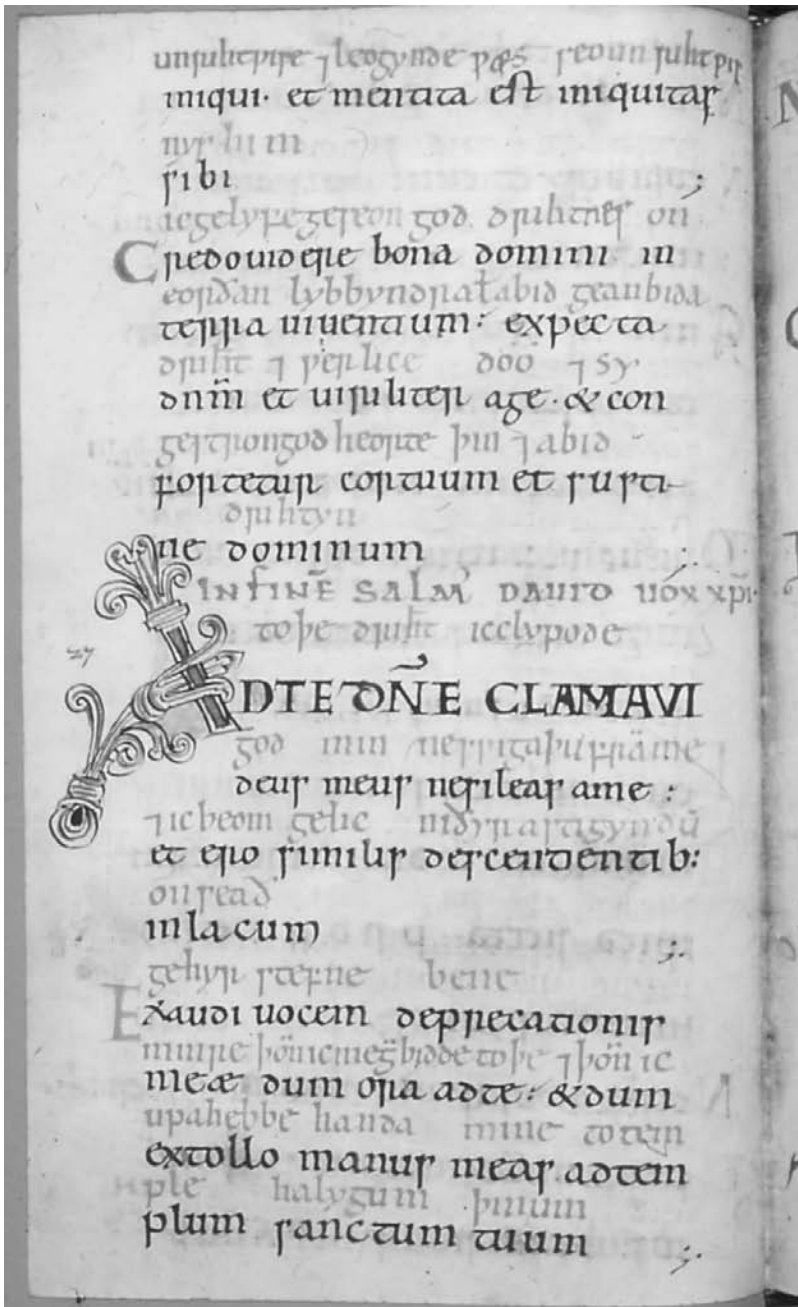


Figure 7.8. Cambridge, University Library MS Ff. I. 23, f. 43v, Foliate Initial, the Winchcombe Psalter. (By permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.)

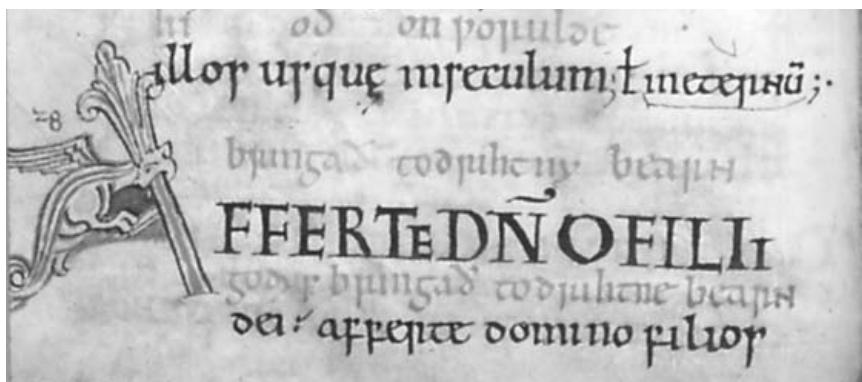


Figure 7.9. Cambridge, University Library MS Ff. I. 23, f. 44v, Monstrous Initial, the Winchcombe Psalter. (By permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.)

the plant, and its leg, stretching forward to form the bar of the 'A,' also has a pullulative analogue. Individually, these images embellish the text they accompany, but together they create an argument about the disposition of a natural world which is unremittingly hostile. However, it should be noted that, while these plants and monsters do bite and tear at the text, they nonetheless are subservient to it, twisting their limbs and branches in order to transform themselves into the 'A's.

Folio 195 verso of this manuscript provides an image of the ultimate subservience of the natural world to the divinity of Christ. (Fig. 7.10) Illustrating Psalms 90:13, "you will tread upon the asp and the basilisk, you will trample underfoot the lion and the dragon," an impressive, full-page framed image presents Christ as powerful and triumphant. Haloed, frontal and erect, he smiles benevolently and holds the staff of victory and a Psalter displaying a portion of this very passage. Below his feet, he tramples the lion and the dragon. According to Gertrude Schiller, this iconography refers to Christ's victory over Satan.⁴⁰ This scene was connected, at least once in the Anglo-Saxon world, with the "desert." On the monumental eighth-century *Ruthwell Cross*, there is an inscription reading, "Jesus Christ, the judge of justice. The beasts and dragons acknowledged in the desert the savior of the world."⁴¹ This text accompanies a scene of Christ trampling a pair of beasts who may, in this instance, be razor-back boars or bears—dangers both more local than the lion or asp of the Vulgate. (Fig. 7.11) The boar and bear were not abstract notions for an English reader, as the lion and the asp were. Consequently, they serve to relocate this biblical scene from the literal desert of the Middle East to the metaphorical 'desert' of England. In this manner, the image of Christ trampling the beasts



Figure 7.10. Cambridge, University Library MS Ff. I. 23, f. 195v, Christ Trampling the Beasts, the Winchcombe Psalter. (By permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.)



Figure 7.11. Ruthwell Cross, Christ and the Beasts Panel. (By permission of Alexander M. Bruce.)

would have been particularly relevant to the Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman audience of this manuscript. Unfortunately for these readers, even within this statement of the power of Christ to subdue the dangers of the natural world, there is a suggestion of the continued presence and potency of monsters. Unlike the image on the *Ruthwell Cross*, in which two local beasts are utterly cowed below the feet of Christ, who stands on their closed muzzles, in the

Winchcombe Psalter image, the dragon is so brazen that it reaches out its long, curling tongue to wrap it around the base of Christ's staff as if to pull it into his sharp-toothed maw. While trampled, this monster does not seem nearly as subdued as the lion, a creature so distant from Britain as to be only slightly less remote and fantastic than the creatures of *Marvels of the East*.

An Anglo-Saxon audience could have found this image, connected to the desert, particularly relevant, as their own land was frequently portrayed as the 'desert.' This may seem to modern readers implausible, given the damp nature of the British landscape, dotted with fens and bogs, but for medieval writers, *desertum* signified any wilderness and it was therefore possible to connect the Old Testament struggles of the Jews in the literal deserts of the Middle East with the figurative deserts, or wild places, of Europe. For example, in his account of Saint Alban, the so-called first martyr of Britain, Gildas was able to compare an English river to the Red Sea, writing that Alban, "by fervent prayer, made dry an unknown path across the noble River Thames, similar to the less-trodden way of the Israelites, while the arc of the testament for a long time was standing in the sand in the middle of the Jordan river."⁴² He adds that, during the persecutions, "those who survived hid themselves in the forest and desert and secret caves."⁴³ Writing a text at the very beginning of the Anglo-Saxon period, Gildas construed Britain as a desert, in various terms, a number of times. In his account of the coming of the Angles and Saxons, he writes that the British "were seduced by their vanity, and wandered in the trackless desert (*invio*) and not on the path."⁴⁴ Gildas also placed himself in the desert, asking in the words of Jeremiah, "Who will give me a traveler's refuge in the desert (*solitudine*)?"⁴⁵ Finally, he borrows the words of Romans 11:3, characterizing himself as "dying of hunger in the desert (*deserto*)."⁴⁶ As James Tschen-Emmons notes in regard to early medieval Irish literature, *desertum* was a "highly charged" word: "The desert could be any wilderness, even one of the mind for that matter, as it was the activity of those who sought it out as a place better to know and please God that made it something holy."⁴⁷

In this manner, all the wilds of Britain could be interpreted as powerful sites of struggle, of danger and therefore of great possibility for spiritual improvement. In particular, medieval British culture focused its fears on those zones which were deemed liminal owing to either their substance or location. As Hrafnhildur Bodvarsdottir writes, "more than anything else, the Anglo-Saxons loathed darkness and fog, and imagined that all evil things could and would appear during the dark and in the mist. Boundary zones (*nomansland*) were set off for battles and hanging of criminals in the Middle Ages."⁴⁸ Indeed, for Andy Orchard, Grendel's origins on the "misty slopes" are crucial to his fearsomeness.⁴⁹ In addition to those places located between

two territories, places which seemed to be located between two elements were particularly frightful. The mists blend air and water. Likewise the fens receive much attention. In his discussion of Anglo-Saxon medical texts, Stephen Pollington notes that elves were particularly connected to fens because “marshland especially is liminal territory, neither land nor water.”⁵⁰

The elves were not the only inhabitants of Britain’s fens. It is out in the fens that Guthlac confronts a horde of demonic tormentors. Perhaps in this liminal zone, such frightful creatures seemed more plausible. Likewise, the Old English *Maxims II* inform us that “giants shall dwell in the fens, alone within the territory.”⁵¹ For Bodvarsdottir, “this passage stresses not only the presence of a monster in the marshland but also the uncivilized aspect of the monster; it dwells alone.”⁵² In this manner, the giants of the *Maxims* are deeply connected with the gigantic monster of the *Beowulf* poem:

He was a fierce spirit called Grendel, famed border-walker. He inhabited the moors, the fen and the stronghold: the unhappy man occupied for a while the dwelling of the race of sea-monsters.⁵³

Here, where Grendel makes his dramatic entrance into the poem, the famous *maercstapa* (border-walker) is intimately tied to his marginal location within Britain, as are the races of the *Marvels of the East*. A close look at this passage reveals interesting incongruities in the account of Grendel and his home. He is a man who walks, and yet, according to some translators, lives in the home of the sea-monsters.⁵⁴ Through these various descriptors, the poet suggests the liminal quality of the monster and his monstrous home.

For Grendel, there seems to be an intimate connection between his identity and his location. Andy Orchard notes that Grendel’s “dwelling-place is described or implied by a bewildering number of terms (*maerc*, *moras*, *fen*, *fæsten*, and *fifelcynnnes eard*) which have as their common feature their remoteness from human habitation.”⁵⁵ This estrangement in turn impacts the character of Grendel, in keeping with standard, Classically derived scientific theories.⁵⁶ Classical philosophers and their medieval adherents argued that major climatic zones (ie. Torrid, Temperate and Frigid) influenced those races dwelling within them. On a smaller scale, the same line of thought seems to be at work within Britain, so that for men, the fens are frightful places of danger, but for Grendel and his mother, they are a sanctuary:

There was water welling in the blood,
The terrible waves swirled, all mingled
with hot blood; battle-gore surged.

The one doomed to die hid since, deprived of joy,
in the *fen-refuge* he laid down his life,
his heathen soul. There, hell received him.⁵⁷

When Grendel returns to the fen to die, his home is referred to as a *fenfreoðo*, a compound joining *fen* with *freoðo*, derived from *fridu*, meaning “peace,” “safety,” “protection,” “refuge” or “asylum.”⁵⁸ This *fenfreoðo*, which George Jack and J. R. Clark Hall both render as “fen-refuge,” is a place of safety and comfort for the monster, just as Heorot is a refuge for men.⁵⁹ *Fridu* appears in various contexts within the poem, but notably is used in compounds to describe Breca’s home:

the land of Brondings,
fair *castle-refuge* where he controlled people,
castle and rings.⁶⁰

Just as Breca’s home is for him a place of safety, so too Grendel’s fen is the refuge which he seeks out in his final desperate and weary moments. This is an instance in which inhabitation results in domestication. Just as men are at home in cities, as Jeffrey Cohen argues, giants and dragons are at home in wild lands.⁶¹ These natural areas were, for the Anglo-Saxons and Anglo-Normans, dark and foreboding places, well-suited to their monstrous inhabitants. It is in his fen-refuge that Grendel dies, and it is there, in this infernal mere, boiling with blood, that “hell received him.” This grim and marginal location which straddles the divide between land and water also seems to bridge the gap between this world and the next, between earth and hell.

However, this does not tell Grendel’s entire story. He is not simply a monster who dwells in the fens. In her excellent article on “Transformations and the Limits of the Human,” Katherine O’Brien O’Keeffe demonstrates through a careful analysis of the terms employed that Grendel’s nature alters as he travels from the fens to Heorot, “for, as the poet brings Grendel from the moor, he brings him as well across the threshold of humanity.”⁶² This is a journey from the periphery to the center, from the unexplored wastes to the heart of human society. As he traverses space, Grendel undergoes an evolution from demonic spirit to man, from *sceadugenga* (shadow-mover) to *manscadda* (sinner, evildoer) and finally, as he arrives at the hall, to *rinc* (man, warrior, or even hero), “the same word used in the following twenty-five lines to describe the sleeping Geats in the hall and Beowulf himself.”⁶³ Orchard similarly observes that, as Grendel approaches the hall out of the “misty slopes,” his vague and protean form is given increasing solidity and

physicality.⁶⁴ In these subtle observations, we see that the line separating monsters from men is far less absolute than it seems, for instance, in *THEM!* Still, taking a closer look at this 1954 film, we can see that this blurred line of division has, over the last thousand years, yet to become sharp. The giant, radioactive ants which threaten to destroy Los Angeles are granted many human traits. Edmund Gwenn, as Dr. Harold Medford, tells us:

Ants are the only creatures on earth other than man who make war. They campaign. They are chronic aggressors and they make slave laborers of the captives they don't kill . . . Even the most minute of them have an instinct and talent for industry, social organization and savagery that makes man look feeble by comparison.⁶⁵

Through entirely inhuman in their form, the ants are surprisingly human in their actions and motivations. Grendel, on the other hand, is “in the form of a man . . . except that he was greater than any other man.” so his relations to us should be less surprising.⁶⁶ Grendel is again tied to his location at the moment that he is beheaded, when his mere instantly begins to bleed:

Grendel lay
lifeless, as he earlier was injured
in battle at Heorot. His body burst wide open
since he, after death, suffered a blow,
a hard sword-stroke, and he cut off his head.
Immediately, then, the wise men who with Hrothgar gazed on the
water, saw
that the surging waves were all stirred up,
the water stained with blood.⁶⁷

His hellish habitation seems react in sympathy with its long-time inhabitant.⁶⁸ Although Beowulf and Grendel are in a sea-cave, underneath but out of the water, nonetheless at the very moment the blow is delivered to Grendel, Hrothgar and his men see the waters surging with blood. As Grendel's lifeless body is mutilated, his watery home spouts blood, indicating that the effect of the location on the identity of the monster is reciprocal, with the location lending attributes to the creature and the creature, in turn, influencing its location.

ANIMATED NATURE

The same text introduces another vital element for this discussion. In the passage, it is the mere, itself, which seems to bleed. Although this may strike the modern reader as not only horrid but also incongruous, I believe it would have been far less surprising to an Anglo-Saxon audience for whom the whole of the natural world was, to varying degrees, animate. The celebrated Old English riddles are a prime example of the trend of projecting life into all aspects of the world.⁶⁹ Craig Williamson links the riddles to Freud's notion of the 'Uncanny,' which is connected to the desire to "project animate power into the surrounding world of inanimate objects."⁷⁰ It was this animism that led to the worship—revealed to us through official ecclesiastical and legal condemnations—of various natural phenomena, including trees, stones and, most notable in the context of Grendel's mere, bodies of water.⁷¹

The animism of the Old English riddles is also powerfully in evidence in initial capitals. In her broad study of animated letters, Laura Kendrick attributes the lack of scholarly discussion of life within lettering to a "reluctance to recognize in the Western Christian tradition—and especially in ourselves—'irrational' cognitive patterns such as animism, the projective perception of life and being in inanimate figures."⁷² Kendrick is surely correct in noting that medieval lettering is teeming with life. We need look no further than the Winchcombe Psalter, discussed above, to find numerous examples of letters transformed into men, monsters and beasts. But there is, I believe, a more fascinating variety of animism frequently at work in Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman initials. Once letters have been transformed into animals, it is only logical that these letters would then be endowed with vitality. More surprising is the impressive vitality granted to vegetation, as noted in the Winchcombe Psalter.

This practice is even more apparent in a twelfth-century manuscript of Lucan's *Pharsalia*. Lucan's work is a first-century account of the Battle of Pharsalus, the decisive conflict fought by Julius Caesar and Pompey Magnus in 48 BCE. This text has been described as "the death scene of the Roman Republic" which, for Lucan, "brought the forces of death and destruction to power at Rome."⁷³ A manuscript of the *Pharsalia* containing a number of interesting inhabited initials was produced at Rochester Cathedral around 1120.⁷⁴ The text begins with an evocation of the violence and horror of civil war:

Of wars worse than civil we sing, through the plains of Emathia, and justice having been given to crime, and the hand of the powerful nation has turned inward to conquer within her own vitals, and lines of battle

of kinsmen . . . Why this frenzy, oh citizens, why this great freedom of iron?⁷⁵

Only a half-century after the Battle of Hastings, this account of violent war between kin for control of a country might have had particular force, which perhaps accounts for the energy which fills its initials. The initial that begins this text is as frenetic and as violent as the text which it accompanies, but it is by no means an illustration of the scene. (Fig. 7.12) Within the 'B' of *Bella* (War) men and beasts struggle within chaotic swirls of foliage. The largest figure in the image, toward the left of lower lobe of the 'B,' raises a club to strike a bird which bites a lion which cranes his neck forward to bite



Figure 7.12. Cambridge, Trinity College MS R. 3. 30, f. 9r, Initial with Swirling Combat and Struggle, Lucan's *Pharsalia*. (By Permission of the Master and Fellows of Trinity College Cambridge.)



Figure 7.13. Cambridge, Trinity College MS R. 3. 30, f. 54r, Initial with Man and Beast Trapped in Foliage, Lucan's *Pharsalia*. (By permission of the Master and Fellows of Trinity College Cambridge.)

at a nude man who in turn swims up the vines back toward the man with the club. This circular composition seems to refer to the closed circuit of violence characteristic of civil war. Connecting all these figures is a turbulent coil of foliage. The vine spirals counterclockwise, whereas the figures spiral clockwise. This counterbalance creates a dynamic composition that keeps turning in on itself. The man with the club, with whom we began, looks terribly sad, as if longing to find his way out of this monstrous, violent forest. At the left edge of the image, within the vertical minim of the 'B,' are three mounted knights. While they are the only portion of this image which can be viewed as literally illustrative, they look rather lost and somewhat

comical. They gaze around themselves, at the letter they inhabit, the chaos to the right, and even out at us. In this manner, they serve to connect the text of Lucan's epic poem, the turbulence of the image, and the viewer.

Further into the manuscript, the foliage seems to have taken a more prominent role in the images. The lobe of a large 'P' is formed by another powerful foliate spiral. (Fig. 7.13) Entangled in its leafy grasp, we find another nude man, desperately struggling to pull apart the branches and fight his way to freedom. Above him, a lion is also trapped in the winding vine. In the first image in this manuscript, the lion was attacking the nude man. Now, however, it turns its attention to their common enemy, twisting its neck around to bite the thick vine which indiscriminately snares man and beast.

These images, while striking, are by no means unique. Why did these illuminators grant such vitality to plant life or, in animistic terms, from where did these plants draw their power? In the preceding discussion, I observed that the medieval English view of nature can be seen as generally hostile. Several passages in *Beowulf* stress the connection between the natural world and the dangerous monsters believed to inhabit it. In this light, we can easily see these twisting, ensnaring vines and branches as a powerful embodiment of this hostility. Another image in the *Pharsalia* manuscript lends further significance to this connection. Folio 35 recto contains a double-initial 'AT' composed of three biting, fighting dragons, tumbling among foliage. (Fig. 7.14) Two form the double-lobed 'A' and the third emerges from the



Figure 7.14. Cambridge, Trinity College MS R. 3. 30, f. 35r, Initial with Fighting Dragons, Lucan's *Pharsalia*. (By permission of the Master and Fellows of Trinity College Cambridge.)

architectural minim of the 'T,' bursting out of it on three sides. The two dragons to the left turn in on one another, as the upper beast grasps the lower's wing in its jaws. They are driven by the same violent, inward spiraling energy of the 'B' on folio 9 recto. A closer look at this initial reveals that the dragons are not in fact fighting amidst foliage, but rather, that the dragons are themselves the foliage. Every plant element, except the classical flourish of acanthus in the capital which forms the bar of the 'T,' is actually a part of one of the dragons. All three have tails which end, not as scaly or slimy points as we might expect, but rather, as burgeoning vines and leaves, much like those that ensnare the men and beasts in the 'B' and 'P' discussed above. The lower left dragon, like his adversary above, is shaded in rich, rather painterly strokes of blue and purple. However, following his tail outward from his body to its end, we see that the illuminator shifts his palette to a verdant green. From the lower edge of the tail, one leaf is just beginning to sprout. The tail of the wingless dragon above is far more vegetative, with leaves, vines and tendrils branching out all along its length. The third dragon's tail is nothing but a broadly fanned out green leaf.

This conjoining of dragon and plant is, I believe, a manifestation of the medieval fear and awe of the natural world. It is worth noting that these dragons, with their foliate tails and flowery breath, are never trapped within the coiling vines. Men, animals and even other monsters, such as the gryphon from a stunning twelfth-century Bible, Bodleian MSS Auct. E. inf. 1, f. 214v (Fig. 7.15), are frequently ensnared, but the dragons seem to be in total harmony with the dangerous vines they themselves produce.⁷⁶ These conjoined plant-creatures are the embodiment of the "postcolonial" notion of the hybrid: "a composite figure derived from biology, botany, and the discourses of race, the hybrid conjoins differences without fully assimilating them."⁷⁷ Just as the mountains and deserts and to an even greater extent the forests and fens were viewed as hostile forces, the plants which characterize them were time and again granted monstrous animation in illuminations. An examination of the context of this image may lend even further insight. The 'AT' begins "*at procul extremis terrarum*," that is, "but far off, at the extremities of the earth . . ."⁷⁸ This passage actually refers to Spain, and yet I doubt that English readers, raised on Bede and Gildas, could have possibly read the phrase "*extremis terrarum*" without thinking of their own land. The image that accompanies this passage is turbulent, with the dragons merging with one another, their foliage, and even their letterforms, so that the three parts are virtually indistinguishable. At the edge of the earth, all life begins to blend into one monstrous mass of biting, clawing violence.

Once identified, initials composed of foliate dragons are easily spotted throughout Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman illumination, ranging at least as far back as the Junius Psalter (See Fig. 7.3–7.4) to the twelfth-century Bible which contains one of the more ornate of these initials. (See Fig. 7.15) The initial that begins the Book of Jeremiah is composed of an astonishing tangle of vibrant vines, all of which emanate from the stunning, multi-colored dragon which winds down the left edge of this ‘V.’ The body of the letter is



Figure 7.15. Oxford, Bodley MS Auct. E. inf. 1, f. 214v, Dragon Initial, Bible. (By permission of the Bodleian Library, the University of Oxford.)

filled by two coils of foliage. The upper coil is the dragon's tail, which rises to encircle a human figure and then spirals downward around a gryphon. The lower spiral originates in the dragon's mouth and thus seems to be his tongue or, perhaps more likely, some sort of emanation. These dragons do not breathe fire, as in modern fantasy. Rather, they exhale these dangerous vines. Both foliate coils emit numerous offshoots and tendrils which further entangle the figures and the right leg of the 'V.'

This image is, while striking, by no means unparalleled in Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman imagery. Indeed, it bears mention that such images are not unique to England, though English art seems particularly rife with them. A Gospel Book in the British Library, Royal 1 B.xi, from the middle of the twelfth century contains images which, while less colorful than those of the *Pharsalia*, are similarly filled with foliate dragons.⁷⁹ The initial page for the Gospel of Luke is dominated by a massive dragon which bends and twists to hold aloft the oval of the 'Q.' (Fig. 7.16) Its tail branches at the base of the text block, the upper portion sprouting small leaves as it ties itself into knots and the lower portion unfurls into a single, large leaf. Again the text at hand seems relevant. The Anglo-Norman designer of this manuscript considered a large, winged dragon, whose tail sprouts leaves, to be an appropriate choice for a Luke 1:1, which begins, "many have undertaken in hand to set forth an account of those things which have occurred among us." On this page, the monster has been granted center stage. The representation of dragons has changed dramatically since their appearance in Wormald's Type I and Type II initials like those found in the Bosworth and Winchcombe Psalters.⁸⁰ In the earlier works, they are generally small heads, appended to foliage and letterforms, whereas in the later works, they are allowed to unfurl across entire pages. However, the conceptual similarities are more striking than these stylistic differences. They still bend to complete the text, and they still at once embody and generate tumultuous foliage.

The opening of the Gospel of John in the British Library volume contains a concluding image for this discussion. A large 'I,' extending above and below the text block, begins John 1:1: "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God and the word was God." (Fig. 7.17) The central roundel of the letter is occupied by the Lamb of Christ, and above this is a hook-billed bird possibly representing John's Eagle, though below it is a frightful, grinning, dragonish creature less clearly associated with this divine pair. The top edge of the letter sprouts bird-heads turned outward—again perhaps references to John's Eagle—and its base sprouts serpent-heads turned inward, biting the ends of a large leaf which hangs



Figure 7.16. London, British Library, Royal 1. B. xi, f. 72r, Dragon Initial, Luke Incipit, Gospel Book. (By permission of the British Library.)



Figure 7.17. London, British Library, Royal 1. B. xi, f. 116v, Lamb and Beasts Initial, John Incipit, Gospel Book. (By permission of the British Library.)

below the letter. This leaf has as its lowest point a head similar to that of the dragon at the beginning of Luke's Gospel. (See Fig. 7.16) The latter was a dragon with foliage germinating from his tail. This image, in turn, contains a graceful foliate flourish which terminates in a beast's head. Hanging upside-down and joined to the beast-head, the leaf becomes a pair of outstretched wings that are as much bat-like as foliate. Here, as elsewhere, the bodies of plant and beast are indistinguishable. They are one and the same, alternating between plants which take the form of beasts and beasts which generate plants. In his discussion of monsters in medieval literature, David Williams writes that "the transgression of elemental boundaries, like those of the body, was another source of monstrous form and, therefore, potentially a principle of monstrous taxonomy."⁸¹ In both the 'Q' and the 'I,' as well as the images discussed above, plant and animal parts mingle freely, melting into one another in a fecund tangle of monstrosity.

Chapter Eight

The Monster Within

Mixing and morphing of forms is part of a larger trend in medieval thought. As Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park write, “European authors certainly used the exotic races to test and explore fundamental boundaries in their own culture—between male and female, wild and civilized, human and animal—as is clear from the prominence in travel narratives of beings such as centaurs, satyrs, hermaphrodites, and cross-dressers.”¹ We have seen this manifested in the *Marvels of the East* and *Liber Monstrorum* (*The Book of Monsters*). However, evidence of this interest clearly expands into manuscripts which are not explicitly focused on monsters. Their appearance in biblical and classical poetic texts suggests a broader interest in monsters and their dangerous connections to the natural world. In initial letters, which are both text and image, and which exist in the text block but also spill into the margins, we find a constant battle raging across a wide array of manuscripts, always with the same principal combatants: Dragons, beasts, men and vines. J. J. G. Alexander notes that “one of the commonest themes of these decorated letters is combat or aggression between humans and animals, and the entwining scroll,” which he attributes to a certain Riegelian *Kunstwollen*:

This arises inevitably as part of the aesthetic of interwoven space . . . But the question of whether such initials were intended to have meaning has also naturally been asked. It is very seldom possible to detect any direct connection with the texts, and the conclusion must be that if there is any meaning it can only be some very generalized variation on the theme of the struggle between good and evil, or of the soul’s upward striving.²

It is in the liminal zone within the folios of manuscripts that we find the same ‘transgressing of elemental boundaries’ which David Williams finds in

explicitly monstrous texts. “Boundaries thus became contested spaces, areas betwixt and between, where relations had to be determined.”³ For many Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman writers and illuminators, the vegetation and slime of fens and bogs results in the constant generation of new forms of life.⁴ This is possible because this environment, in and of itself, is a hybrid mixture of two elements, earth and water. Similarly, these images, which take on the roles of marginalia, text and image, are perfect catalysts for the constant generation of new hybrid bodies.

Returning to the Gospels in the British Library, Royal 1 B.xi, the first image in the manuscript, which begins Jerome’s prologue to the *Vulgate*, is a large ‘P’ (Fig. 8.1) in which human, plant and monster are once more merging

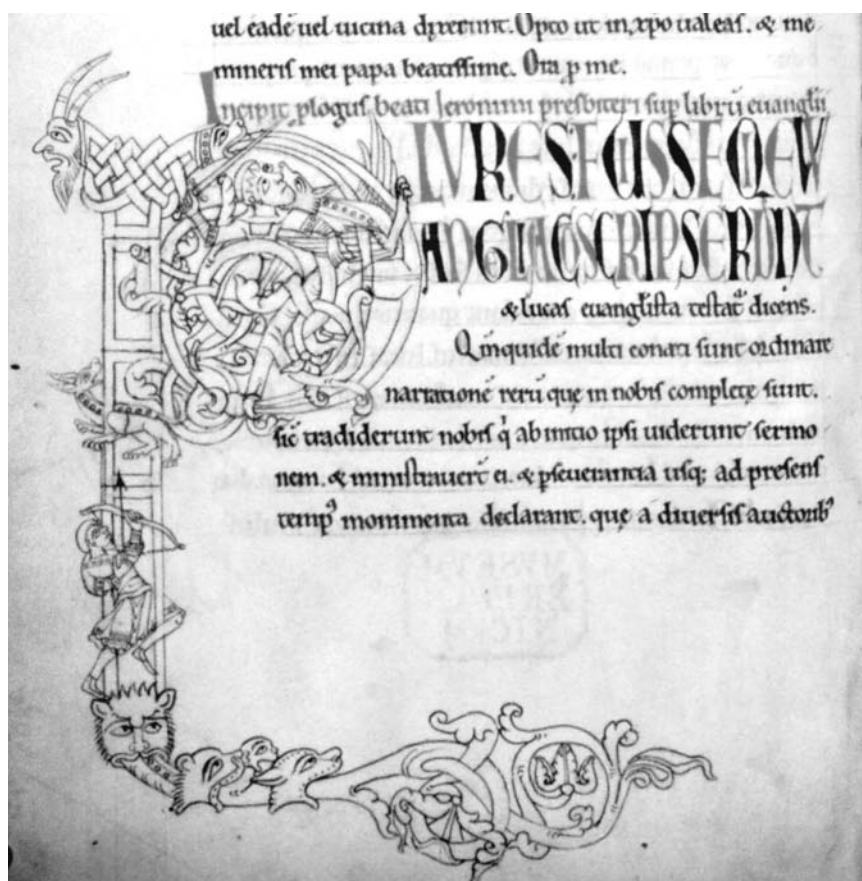


Figure 8.1. London, British Library, Royal 1. B.xi, f. 2v, Initial with Man Struggling against Dragon, Jerome’s Prologue, Gospel Book. (By permission of the British Library.)

together in their struggles. In the lobe of the letter, a man with a sword grapples with a dragon that is in turn biting his chin. However, they are both trapped in the foliage which is an extension of the letter which, in turn, is being vomited forth by a monstrous head at its apex. Descriptions of the complex interconnections in these initials will inevitably become as convoluted as the images themselves. They require careful study in order to trace the sources of each of their tangled strands, and yet “the eye can scarcely help following the lines . . . to see how the ornament is formed.”⁵ Again, part of the foliage is formed by the body of the dragon, whose tail curls and then branches. However, in this image the man is subtly drawn into the system; a very close examination of the image reveals that, for a brief moment, the man’s left sleeve and the foliage in which he is enmeshed are represented by the same curving lines. The delicate, outline-drawn style allows for this ambiguity or duality within the image. Roy Porter argues that “the boundaries of the body are fluid.”⁶ I would add that the visual divisions between bodies and between categories of life—plant, beast, monster and human—are so fluid that one flows freely into another. In this Gospel, this piece of divine scripture, the substance of man, dragon, violently teeming vegetation and, indeed, the letter itself, become indistinguishable from one another.

The *Beowulf* poet provides a similar overlap of man and monster. In Katherine O’Brien O’Keeffe’s insightful analysis, we saw that not much separates hero from monster, as the two merge during the fight in Heorot. Likewise, O’Keeffe’s discussion of Hrothgar’s cautionary tale of Heremod shows that actions can render one monstrous. Heremod is “a ruler out of control.”⁷ His actions are so inhuman that he is driven from the society of men: “He was made to live with the giants, in the power of the fiends.”⁸

The permeability and mutability of the human body was, for Anglo-Saxons and Anglo-Normans, not merely an interesting theme for fictive poems and images. It was a very real and tangible aspect of medieval life. In contrast to modern conceptions, the bodies of men and animals were neither confined nor delimited nor permanently configured.⁹ Transformation and merger with other bodies were always possible, as were the entry and exit of spirits and their weapons. Within the strong record of Anglo-Saxon medical theory and practice, a handful of medical texts survive which, while often somewhat obscure, suggest ideas about the permeability and transformativity of the human body. The Lacnunga Manuscript, for example, provides a cure for an ailment of the eyes caused by *wyrms*, which may signify any snake-like creatures, ranging from worms to dragons.¹⁰ Are we to interpret this ailment as the effect of the presence of tiny worms within the eyes, or the influence of a larger creature, outside the body? It is unclear, but contemporary Old High

German and continental Old Saxon charms for similar illnesses seek to drive these *wyrms* out of the human body.¹¹

In the medical manuscripts, the most frequently mentioned fabulous beings are elves. While perhaps the term does not conjure images of monstrosity, owing in no small part to J. R. R. Tolkien's creations and their later descendants in modern literature, these elves are most certainly harmful beings. There are no known descriptions of these elves, but it seems clear that they were not the cute, benign sprites of modern folklore. We know them only through cures for the frequent harms they were thought to cause. Elves are the subject of about a dozen cures and charms in the Lacnunga Manuscript and Bald's *Leechbook* which claim to remedy everything from elf-shot horses—a problem so common that we are advised to always carry the proper herbs with us to counter the effects—to the surprisingly fatal elf-hiccups.¹² Stephen Pollington notes that elf-lore was so prevalent that:

the most famous Anglo-Saxon king, Ælfred, has the word *ælf* 'elf' as the first element in his name; it occurred in many other combinations and seems to have connotations of supernatural wisdom and learning—quite appropriate for one of Europe's foremost intellectual leaders.¹³

Given the context established above, it should come as no surprise that elves were particularly associated with the fens.¹⁴ Pollington has identified a possible visual representation of elves from the Utrecht Psalter, where a man is beset with a number of winged humanoid figures who have riddled him with arrows.¹⁵ A very similar image appears in the Harley Psalter, which was almost certainly copied from the Utrecht Psalter.¹⁶ (Fig. 8.2) This identification appears plausible, since many elfish ailments were believed to be caused by darts shot by elves into men and beasts.¹⁷ This also seems to have been a typical explanation for sudden, shooting pains, like rheumatism, arthritis and stitch. According to Pollington, "the belief in this 'elfshot' persisted in some rural districts until the present century, and as proof country folk would occasionally find the small arrowheads which had been used—these were Neolithic or Mesolithic flints."¹⁸

The Lacnunga Manuscript also provides a charm for protection from *ælfside* (elfish influence or nightmare).¹⁹ Anglo-Saxons believed that dreams were the result of outside stimuli.²⁰ Instead of our internal Freudian fantasies, they were the result of inspiration—literally the entrance of a spirit into the human mind—and could be divine, demonic or monstrous, as in the case of *ælfside*. This charm involves considerable action on the part of a Christian priest, who is required to provide blessings and prayers.²¹ The



Figure 8.2. London, British Library, Harley 603, f. 22r, Elves Shooting Man. (By permission of the British Library.)

apotropaic charm and others like it suggest that Anglo-Saxon Christianity managed to incorporate Germanic beliefs into its cosmology. Priests must have believed in elves, or at least routinely humored those who did. As Pollington notes in regard to the eleventh-century Charm to Remedy a Field (*Æcerbot*), “the participation in the ritual of a local priest is assumed without comment.”²²

The Old English medical texts suggest that people were not only in peril of being invaded by outside forces. They could also be transformed by them. The hallucinogenic ergot fungi could thus turn man into a *warg* or werewolf.²³ By eating the poisonous, spoiled grain, a human could become a monster. Permeable bodies were described in Old English poetry as “houses of the spirit,” so that a cut, as observed by James Elkins, might be referred to as a “wound door” (*bengeat*) through which the spirit can enter or escape.²⁴ As Pollington argues, the medical manuscripts implicitly construct a view of

middaneard, the world, as an “unstructured wild” outside of home and community, threatening and dangerous.²⁵

The notion that men were in constant peril of being transformed into monsters is powerfully evoked in a series of initials in Cambridge, Trinity College MS O. 2. 51, a late eleventh-century manuscript of Priscian’s *Institutiones Grammaticae*.²⁶ This sixth-century text is “the most comprehensive body of grammatical learning inherited from antiquity,” as well as “the longest classical grammatical text extant and one of the longest texts of any type to be transmitted in manuscript.”²⁷ This immense work was very popular in the tenth and eleventh centuries; Ælfric translated portions of it into English, thereby producing the first English-language Latin grammar.²⁸ The result was not dissimilar to the sort of texts, like the famous *Wheelock’s Latin*, used by students today.

The Trinity manuscript is small but thick, heavily annotated with signs of considerable use. The text is written in a very small proto-Gothic minuscule, with many abbreviations and narrow margins. Subject, layout and condition suggest that this was a library text, not a presentation volume. Such manuscripts are not usually illuminated, but those that were would have been well studied over the course of the year.²⁹ The images in this volume—pictorial initials lightly painted in delicate washes marking the beginning of each book of the *Grammar*—would reward such attention with their interconnections.

The first initial in this manuscript, on its first folio, has regrettably been cut out. The first surviving image in the manuscript (Fig. 8.3) represents a roaring lion, ensnared in energetic coils of foliage. Below the lion is a small portrait-like head in profile, perhaps representing Priscian. The *Grammar* begins with a discussion of Voice, of spoken language, which Priscian categorizes into various forms. The lion, its jaws wide-open in a frozen, silent roar, could thus be viewed as an illustration of the category of “inarticulate [speech], the opposite [of articulate speech], which springs forth with no disposition of the mind . . . It is that which cannot be written, although it can be understood, that is, the hissing/whistling of man and groans . . . [and speech] which cannot be written nor understood, that is rattling, bellowing and the like.”³⁰ Our interpretation requires that we understand the lion’s roar as a form of speech, though utterly senseless. It would be an odd, somewhat discordant note on which to begin this extremely controlled text that “reflects Priscian’s sweeping approach toward Latin grammar,” providing, for example, “all declensions and all conjugations, all cases and all genders, all numbers and all tenses.”³¹ Given the rich repertory of exempla from classical literature, including the opening line of Virgil’s *Aeneid* (“I sing of arms and

the man") within the first paragraph, why has the designer of the initial chosen a senseless brute, violently twisting about in the foliage and bellowing at the ordered text that marches on for over 150 folios?³² From the first surviving image in this thick manuscript, we can already sense a countercurrent, an opposition between text and image of the sort Michael Camille describes as common in the later Middle Ages.³³ Further, while the beast is given free reign to roar, the man in the initial is forced to keep silent, his mouth closed, his expression sour, flat and lifeless as the face of a coin in comparison to the noisy lion above.

The next pictorial initial in this manuscript (Fig. 8.4) again contains the roaring lion, twisting backward, trapped in foliage. However, in this image the foliage becomes monstrous. At the apex of the letterform of the 'S' is a dragon head. The dragon's wing and claw are gracefully floating within the upper curve of the letter, and the lower curve forms its tail, from which the foliage blossoms. Whereas the initial from folio 2 was comprised of the lion and the human head, this is now a threefold creation with lion, human head and dragon. Perhaps, then, it is possible to venture a guess at the contents of the lost first initial. If these three images formed a sequence, then it seems logical that the first would have contained a single figure, either the lion or the portrait. Although we now have no means of determining which it might have been, the use of author-portraits to begin texts was conventional from Late Antiquity onward. Thus, a Roman portrait bust like those which appear on folios 2 and 9 would have been appropriate for a classical author like Priscian.

Although I have observed a possible counter-textual tone, it is probably unwise to assume too much subversive content, particularly in monastic books such as this. The circumstances of production were communal and controlled, not individual and free, and therefore it is likely that most, if not all, images in some way support or embellish the text. The *Grammar* aims at a comprehensive treatment of its subject, built up over the course of successive chapters. The images mark the textual divisions, calling attention to the beginning of each chapter. But, more to the point, this series can be perceived as working in a manner analogous to the text. Thus, the third initial (assuming the presence of either the lion or the man in the lost first initial) can be seen as somewhat encyclopedic, much like the text it accompanies. The first image probably contained a man or lion. The second contains them both. The third contains a man, lion and dragon. Add to these the presence of plant life in all three, and what they present *seriatim* are the major categories of life: plant, animal, monster and human. In this manner, one small initial contains the whole of creation, as do the *mappaemundi* discussed in

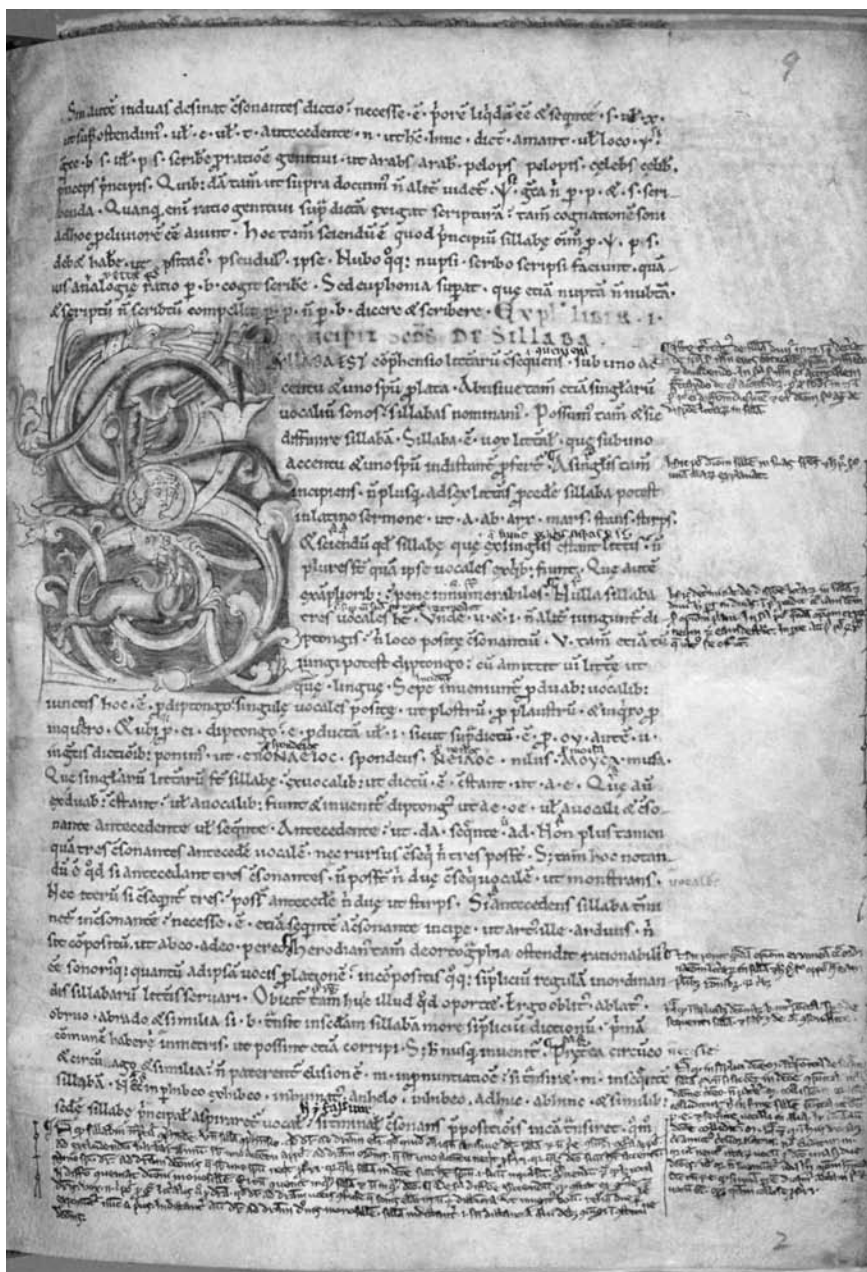


Figure 8.4. Cambridge, Trinity College MS O. 2. 51, f. 9r, Initial with Dragon, Lion and Portrait, Priscian's *Grammar*. (By permission of the Master and Fellows of Trinity College Cambridge.)

Chapter 3, from demon to brute to man. But what, if anything, might this have to do with the syllable—"a combination of letters resulting from one accent and brought forth by one breath"—the subject of this chapter and ostensibly the subject of this initial?³⁴ The syllable is a single division of sound, one component or building block through which words and sentences are constructed. So too, each of these figures represents one of the components that combined to create the medieval English world view, thereby revealing a thematic correspondence, albeit tenuous, between text and image.

As if to draw this series to a close, the next initial contains only decorative foliage.³⁵ Just as images are used to signal textual divisions, perhaps they are also used to signal divisions within their own sequences. Following this initial is a fabulous 'D' (Fig. 8.5), filled with green and red foliage, which explodes upward from the base of the tail of a dragon, who curls through the minim of the letter. In the image from folio 9, the dragon was incorporated within the letter. Now, it has broken free. The lion is gone, and we now have two portrait busts. To the left is a tonsured man, possibly the monastic reader, scribe or illuminator of this manuscript. To the right is a veiled woman, who may be a personification of *Grammatica*, a manifestation of the strong Anglo-Saxon interest in the classical tradition of the personification of abstract concepts.³⁶ The monk gazes across at her, as if seeking inspiration for his difficult task of learning and conforming to the rules contained in this massive text.

I see this initial as one of a pair, with the following initial as the other half. (Fig. 8.6) This image, a 'Q' with its descender formed by a dragon that twists its neck to grip the letterform, recalls the initial page for Luke in the British Library Gospels discussed above. (See Chapter 7, Fig. 7.16) Above the dragon, we again find two portrait roundels, this time with the veiled figure of *Grammatica* on the left and an untunsured man on the right, possibly representing Priscian. This image accompanies the passage on "the generation of nouns" and, in Latin as in English, 'generation' carries a sense of production, of birth or creation.³⁷ The portraits may imply the generation of the text, but what might the dragon imply?

Continuing to work through this thick manuscript, the following image (Fig. 8.7) is compositionally very similar. However, in place of the dragon, the descender of this 'Q' is formed by a nude man who is, himself, being attacked by a very small dragon that wraps its sinuous body around the man and pecks at his eyes. The man's pose and coloring are very similar to the dragon in the previous image, suggesting a connection between these two figures. A very close look reveals that the dragon's wing and claw seem to

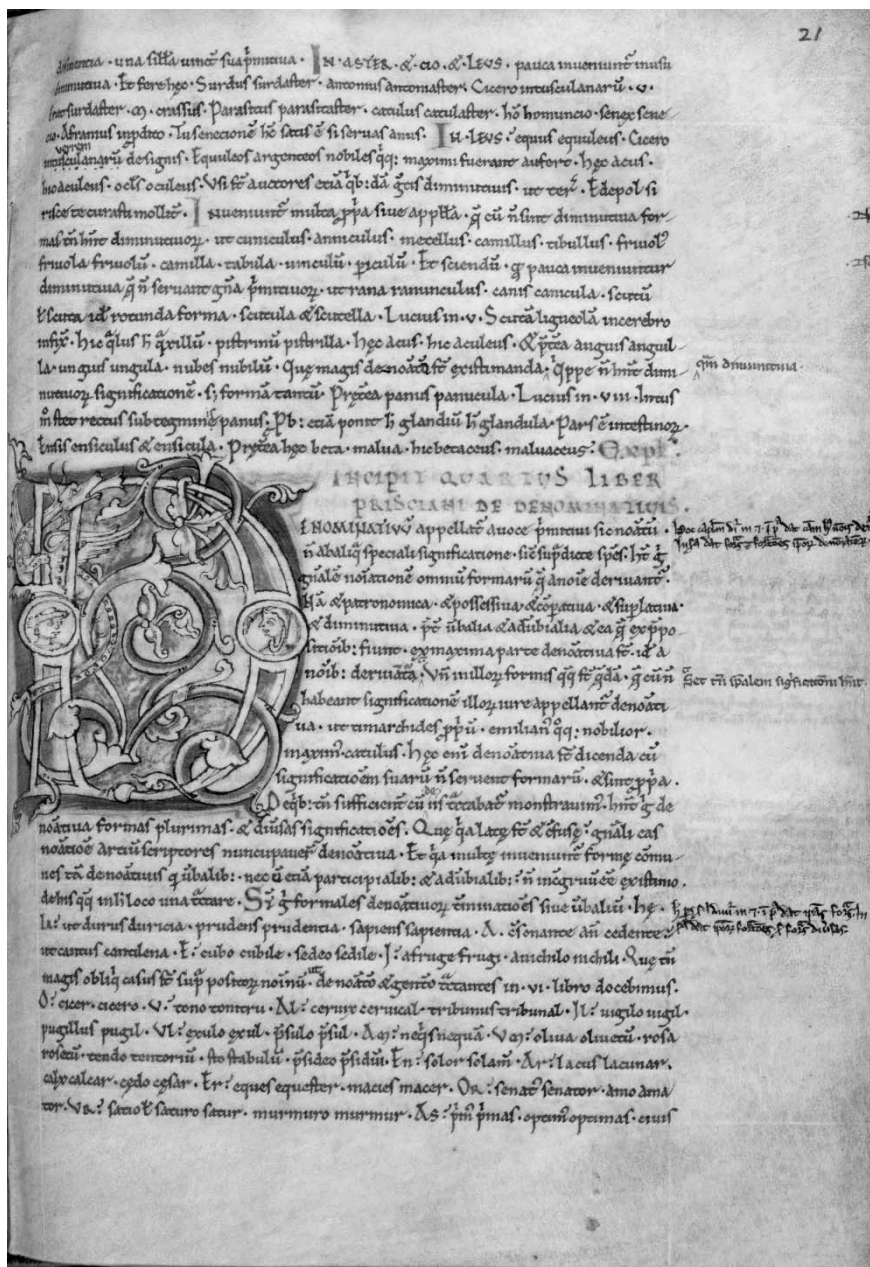
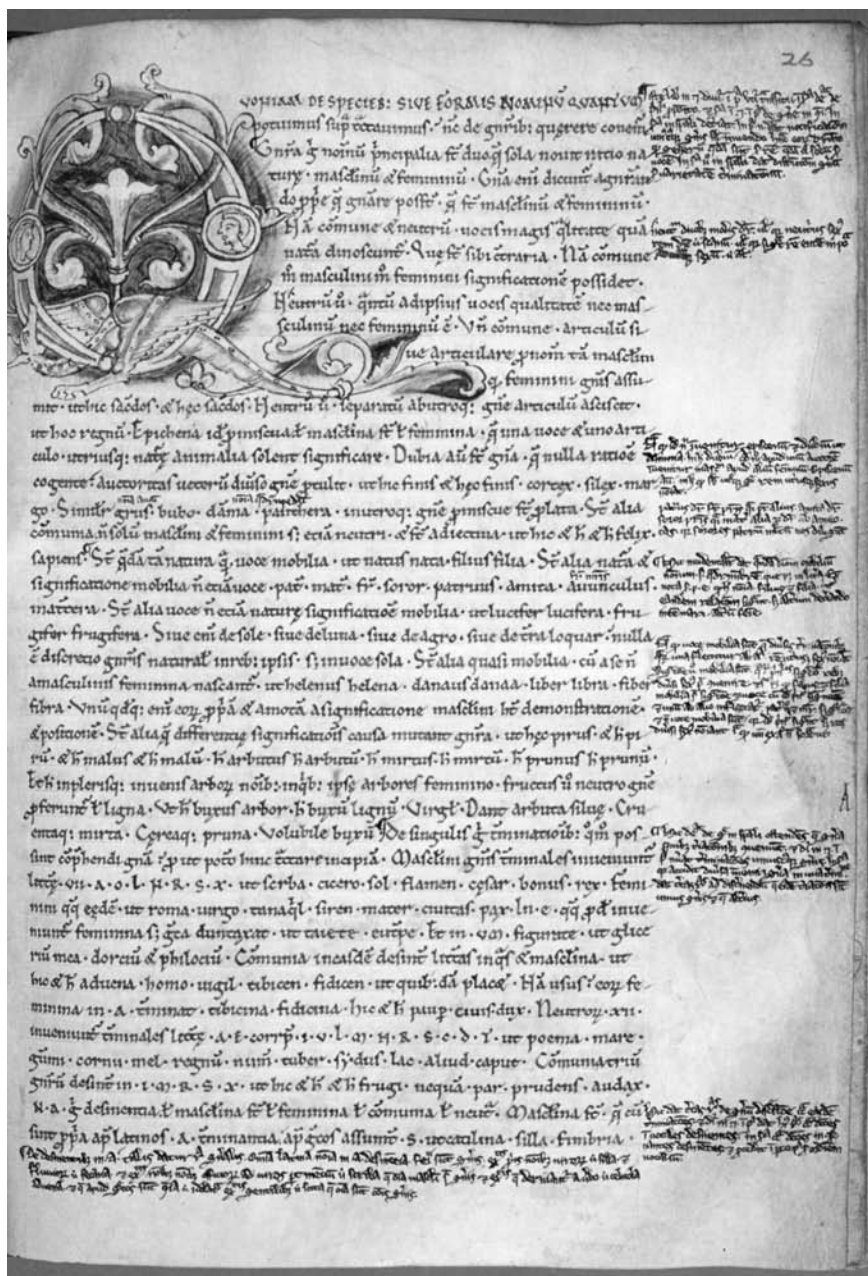


Figure 8.5. Cambridge, Trinity College MS O. 2. 51, f. 21r, Initial with Dragon, Monk and Grammatica, Priscian's *Grammar*. (By permission of the Master and Fellows of Trinity College Cambridge.)



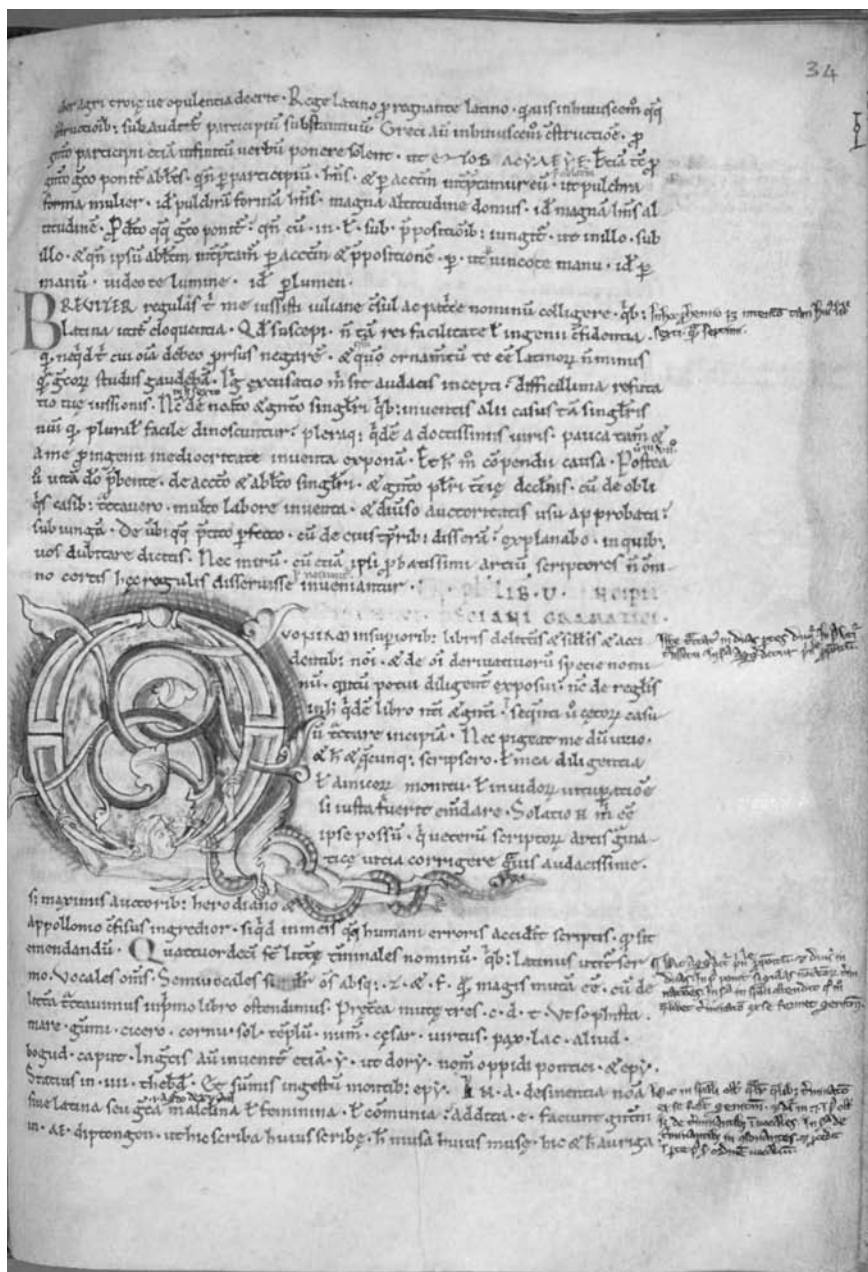


Figure 8.7. Cambridge, Trinity College MS O. 2. 51, f. 34r, Initial with Dragon and Man Intertwined, Priscian's *Grammar*. (By permission of the Master and Fellows of Trinity College Cambridge.)

overlap the man's hip, and yet the dragon's body clearly wraps around behind the man at this point. We must assume one of two possibilities; either the illuminator has simply made an error, though his delicate work weaving the dragon's tail through the man's legs makes this seem unlikely, or the illuminator has consciously overlapped their forms, using this spatial ambiguity to imply a connection between man and dragon, which will, in fact, be made more explicit later in the manuscript. They are conjoined twins, literally joined at the hip, which explains the illuminator's unusual choice to paint the dragon's wing in the same pale flesh-tone used for the man, rather than the bolder reds and greens used for its body and for the wings of most of the other dragons.

From this point on, the action increases as a battle rages between the man and dragon from folio to folio throughout the rest of the manuscript. I will therefore move more rapidly through these images, as their narrative pace quickens. Folio 46 contains a 'T' (Fig. 8.8) with our man at the juncture between the minim and the bar and the dragon, now grown somewhat larger, biting his foot. Below, a centaur with no arrow in his bow aims upward, toward both. Yet again, *Grammatica* and a man face one another across the chaos of the image. Instead of attending to the dragon, our man gestures at the last words of Book Six, a series of pejorative adjectives with which the man may intend to describe himself, his adversary, or his initial: "flattering, deceitful, weak, haughty, discordant."³⁸

The initial on folio 59 (Fig. 8.9) shows the man and dragon still fighting. At last, our man has found some clothes and a sword, which he is attempting to force down his adversary's gullet. Now grown to full size, the dragon looks more ferocious than the little *dracones* of the last few images, and it begins to generate tangling vines that rise up against the man. Now, he is the equal of the man. They are locked in violent combat, each grasping the other in a pair of mirrored gestures. Indeed, the illuminator has gone to great pains to create a roughly symmetrical composition comprising two rather disparate bodies. To match the dragon's long neck and head visually and physically, the illuminator (and, through a pun, the man) has drawn a sword. To match the dragon's splayed wings and long, curving tail, he has added a trio of foliate swirls in analogous positions. The result is an image of well-matched rivals, striving for dominance. Whereas the dragon's wings seemed to be attached to the man's hip on folio 34, now the foliage that sprouts from its tail provides him visual compensation for his winglessness. Again, the illuminator appears to have intentionally shaped his image to the content of the text. The initial—by far the most active in the manuscript thus far—introduces the discussion of verbs which are, as Priscian tells us, the parts of

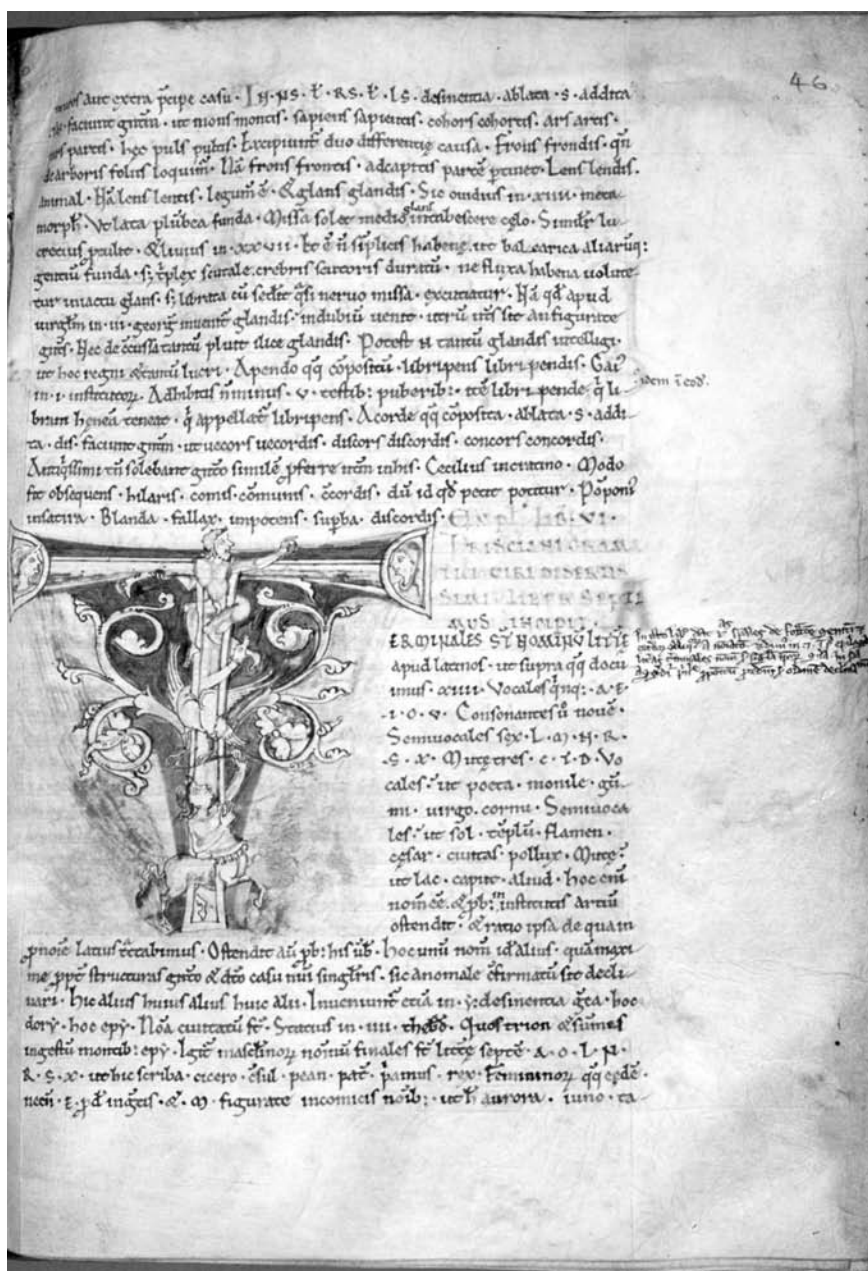


Figure 8.8. Cambridge, Trinity College MS O. 2. 51, f. 46r, Initial with Dragon Biting Man, Priscian's *Grammar*. (By permission of the Master and Fellows of Trinity College Cambridge.)



Figure 8.9. Cambridge, Trinity College MS O. 2. 51, f. 59r, Initial with Dragon and Man Battling, Priscian's *Grammar*. (By permission of the Master and Fellows of Trinity College Cambridge.)

speech that “signify performing or suffering.”³⁹ This grammatical reciprocity seems to be aptly embodied in the image.

In the following initial (Fig. 8.10), the pair wrestle onward. Here, as on folio 34, the man and dragon are once more joined at the hip, merged into a mass of struggling limbs, wings and heads which combine to form a dramatic, chiastic composition. From folio to folio, they tumble and tussle, but neither is able to gain the upper hand. Now, they seem to be merging into one beast, which struggles to climb the letter. Turning to the opening of the next chapter (Fig. 8.11), we move from verb declensions to the “past perfect of the third conjugation.”⁴⁰ It has become increasingly difficult to reconcile these fantastic battles with this remarkably stolid text. In this image, the man runs down the letter ‘I,’ chasing the dragon as he pulls at its tail.

The ongoing battles in the manuscript are so intense they seem to call for a cinematic musical score. As we turn from chapter to chapter, the combatants surge and swim through the letters. They tumble and twist, with one gaining the upper hand, only to be cast down in the next initial. Just when our hero seems to have the advantage, he is drawn off by a green-bearded man with a knife. (Fig. 8.12)⁴¹ This gives the dragon time to recuperate, lying low at the bottom of the ‘Q’ and exhaling a sigh of spiraling blue foliage. Fully recovered, the dragon returns to bite at the man’s heel. (Fig. 8.13) Its tail has grown into an immense mass of tangled vines sprouting fresh green leaves. A few folios later, we arrive at the most dramatic moment in this sequence. On folio 111v (Fig. 8.14), the manuscript’s imaginary score would be reaching its climax with the tympani booming and trumpets blaring. Here, we find the culmination of the violent battle between man and dragon that has raged intermittently over the last eighty folios. At last, the battle is won by the man who, flushed with the heat of battle, firmly grasps the dragon’s tail, and casts him down. The dragon seems to belch out his last foliate breath, which has turned red and bloody. Indeed, the entire lower register of the letter seems to swim with his gore. Above, triumphant, the man gazes skyward, exulting in his hard-won victory over his monstrous counterpart.

And yet, looking again at the man, we see the price he has paid for his victory. Initially conjoined with the dragon, so that one wing and claw joined them at the hip, the man’s entire lower half has now been transformed into that of a dragon. From the very beginning of this series of images, I have argued, this man is depicted as connected to and twinned with his monstrous adversary. At last, at its end, he begins to assume the dragon’s form. A few folios later, we find a single dragon, alone in his ‘C.’ (Fig. 8.15) I believe that this figure—on the right side of the letter and surrounded by triumphant

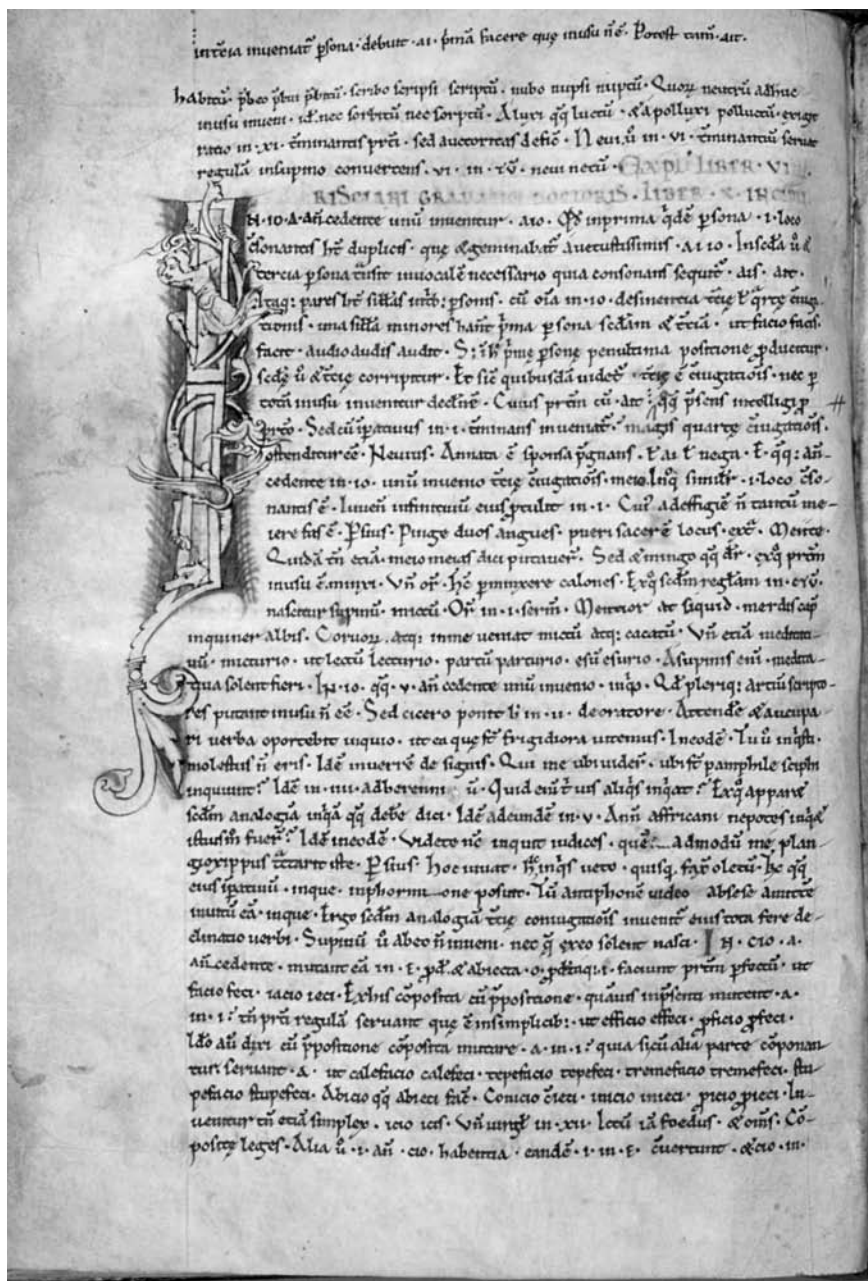


Figure 8.11. Cambridge, Trinity College MS O. 2. 51, f. 81v, Initial with Man Gaining Upper Hand, Priscian's *Grammar*. (By permission of the Master and Fellows of Trinity College Cambridge.)

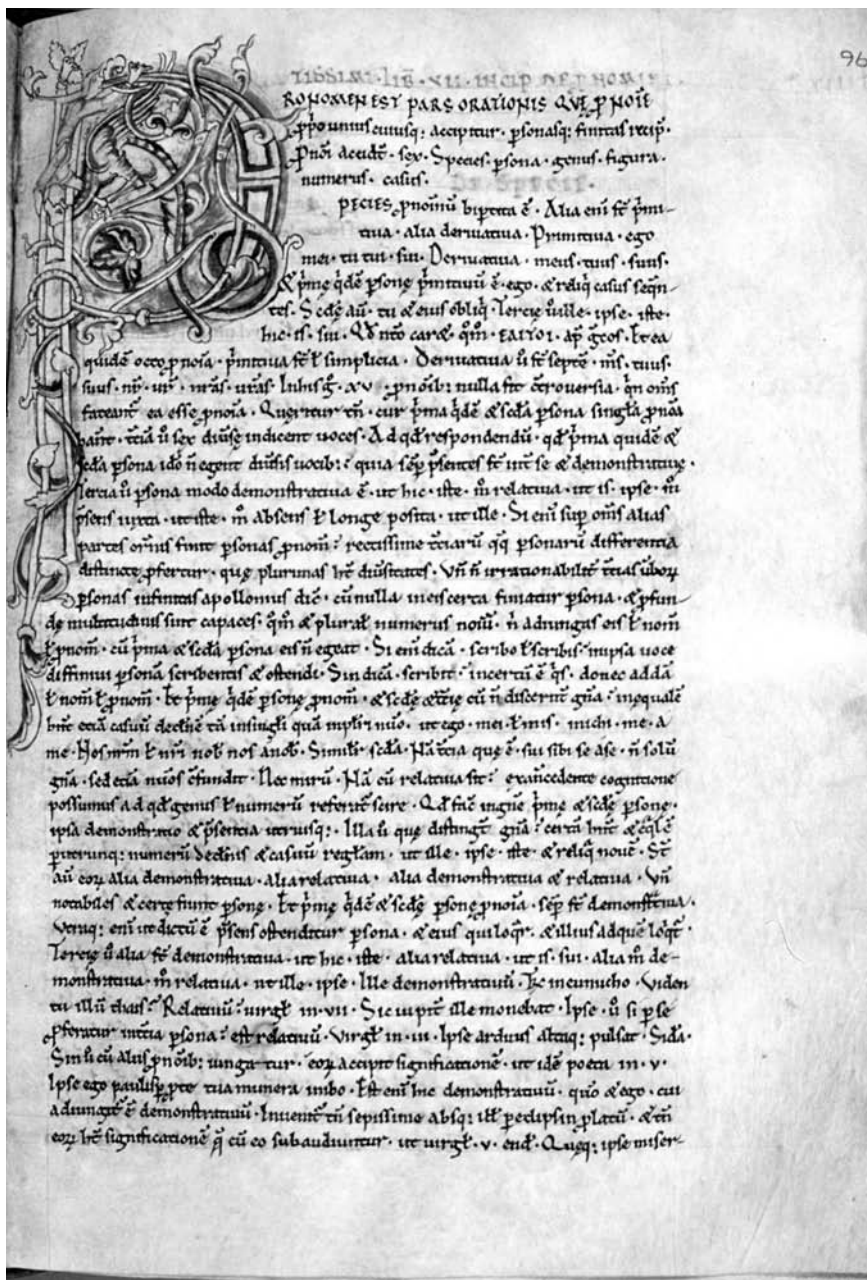


Figure 8.13. Cambridge, Trinity College MS O. 2. 51, f. 96r, Initial with Dragon Dominant, Priscian's *Grammar*. (By permission of the Master and Fellows of Trinity College Cambridge.)

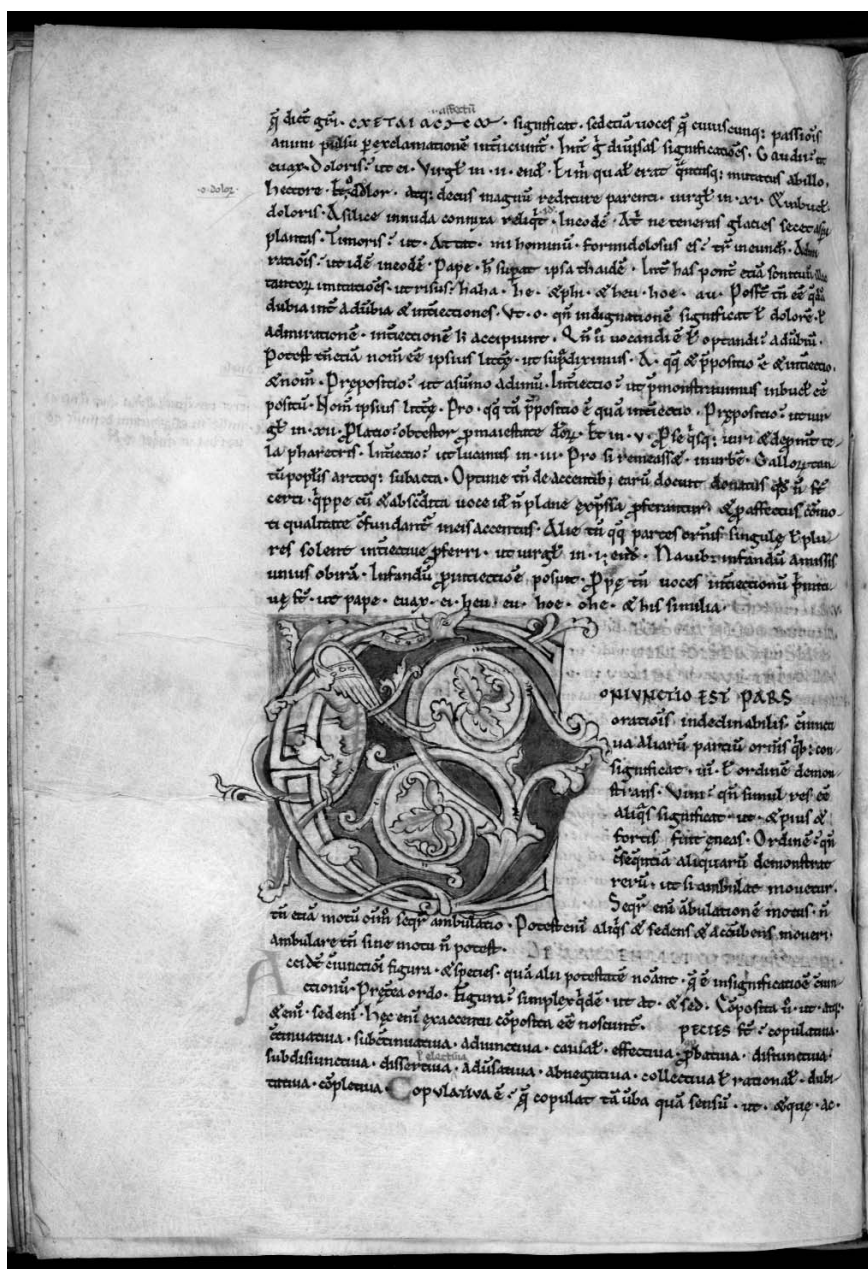


Figure 8.15. Cambridge, Trinity College MS O. 2. 51, f. 116v, Initial with Dragon, Priscian's *Grammar*. (By permission of the Master and Fellows of Trinity College Cambridge.)

green, as was the man-dragon of the previous initial—is intended to represent not the original dragon, recently vanquished, but the original man, now fully transformed into a monster. This image forms the ‘C’ of *Coniunctio*, beginning the chapter on conjunctions, on those parts of speech that link concepts, uniting disparate ideas together to form cohesive sentences.⁴² What could be a more compelling image than this lone figure, a man transformed into a dragon, whose regal tail erupts into a torrent of graceful vines? Daston and Park argue that the *Marvels of the East* were “markers of the outermost limits of what [medievals] knew, who they were, or what they might become.”⁴³ As these dragons demonstrate, the markers were far from absolute, and the possibility existed for men to cross over, becoming the very monsters against which they had attempted to define themselves.

The transformation of a man into a dragon occurs in at least one other manuscript. Laura Kendrick draws attention to an image from a twelfth-century French manuscript of Augustine’s *On Christian Doctrine* (Fig. 8.16) in which a man who fights with a dragon has sprouted claws instead of feet, “as a result of the dragon’s bite?”⁴⁴ Like vampires, these dragons seem to inflict infectious bites which have the power to transform the men who fight them into dragons. The result is that, although in each case a dragon is defeated, its vanquisher has been visibly contaminated by its bestial form.

By the end of the manuscript, the illuminator seems to have let his images run away with him. As their internal logic and action become stronger, the quest to connect the images with their texts becomes increasingly difficult. Inadvertently or by design, this disjunction serves to continue the subversive counter-text offered by the first images of the manuscript. The ponderous grammatical text, dedicated to the rigorous effort to wrest order from the naturally occurring chaos of language has been, itself, infiltrated by a series of fantastic images of monsters warring across the initial letters that begin each chapter. And yet, in their own strange way, these images can be seen to work in tandem with Priscian’s heroic lexical struggle. As David Porter observes, Priscian was fascinated by the oddities of Latin, by those words which he was unable to fit within his rigid schema, strange words like *gummi* and *frui*, two indeclinable nouns.⁴⁵ Priscian battled with language as the armed man battles with the dragon.

Earlier I asked how the dragon on folio 26 might be connected with the topic of the “generation” discussed in the attendant text. Based on this series of images, it seems reasonable to conjecture that dragons are not only capable of generating foliage, but also have the power to multiply themselves like vampires, creating more monsters by infecting humans in their attacks. With this context in mind, it now seems possible to re-view the look of



Figure 8.16. Cambrai, Médiathèque municipale, MS 559, f. 40v, Initial with Dragon Biting Man. (By permission of Cambrai, Médiathèque municipale.)

revulsion on the face of the man in the image on folio 34 (See Fig. 8.7) as an intense expression of self-loathing. Looking into the eyes of the small dragon, the man seems to see his own monstrous self. On the other hand, perhaps we might read this image in different (perhaps less anachronistic) terms. Beyond the human figure's apparent disgust, the entwining of the pair

might be read as sexual in nature. Recalling the tense attack or embrace of the homophagic monster of the *Marvels* (See Chapter 5, Fig. 5.4), the joining of these two at the hips might suggest a cross-species encounter. The dragon's long, sinuous body snugly hugs the man's buttocks, and then slides between his thighs, recalling Peter Damian's contemporary lambasting of members of the clergy who engage in sexual activities. He writes:

There are some who pollute themselves, others who soil one another mutually though repeatedly touching each other's members with their hands, others fornicate between the thighs, others in their rears.⁴⁶

The sinful nature of the resulting hybrid could be seen as illustrated in the Trinity *Pharsalia*, discussed above. Here, below the nude man struggling against the powerful foliage, is a human-headed winged lion. (See Chapter 7, Fig. 7.13) The lion-man holds up a very long, potentially phallic finger, pointing toward the bared buttocks of the nude man and thereby perhaps eluding to homoeroticism. Such mismatched mates as the man and dragon of the Trinity *Grammar*, their bodies intertwined in sinful coupling, could only have been seen as capable of producing wicked offspring.⁴⁷

In either case, whether the dragons are multiplying themselves through infectious bites or sinful intercourse, they seem capable of reproduction, of generation. Has the manuscript's later annotator understood this series in much the same way?⁴⁸ In the lower margin of the final illuminated folio, he added what are, aside from a bit of line and a dot on folio 142 that form a profile head and the usual formulaic *nota bene* hands that appear sporadically, his only drawings. Directly beneath the dragon (Fig. 8.17), which is the final image in this wonderful manuscript, he has drawn two heads in profile. (Fig. 8.18) The upper head is clearly that of the dragon, with its characteristic long ears and pointed snout. Below this is the head of a man. The two are joined together by a single line that forms the base of the dragon's neck and the top of the man's head. The line which forms the back of their necks is continuous, again a single line delineating both figures. This little sketch seems to be a visual cipher for the entire series which has raged through most of this manuscript. It presents either a dragon growing out of a man, or the two, joined into a single being. This annotator has provided a very lengthy textual gloss to accompany the main text of this manuscript. He seems also to have provided a visual gloss on its sequence of images.

Once more, monsters stand out as breakers of category. These dragons are, like the parasitic larvae of Ridley Scott's *Alien*, more terrifying and more revolting when they emerge from within than when they are out in the

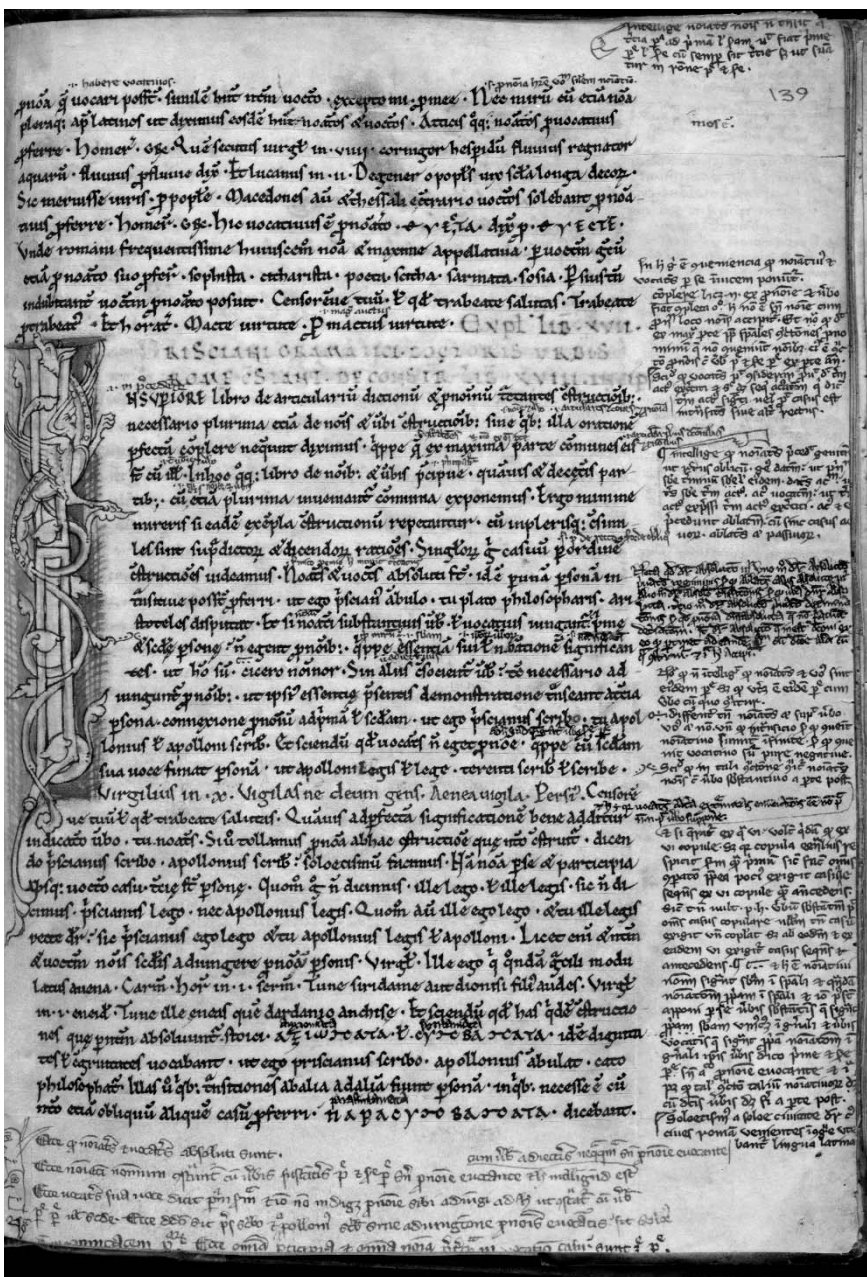


Figure 8.17. Cambridge, Trinity College MS O. 2. 51, f. 139r, Initial with Dragon, Priscian's *Grammar*. (By permission of the Master and Fellows of Trinity College Cambridge.)

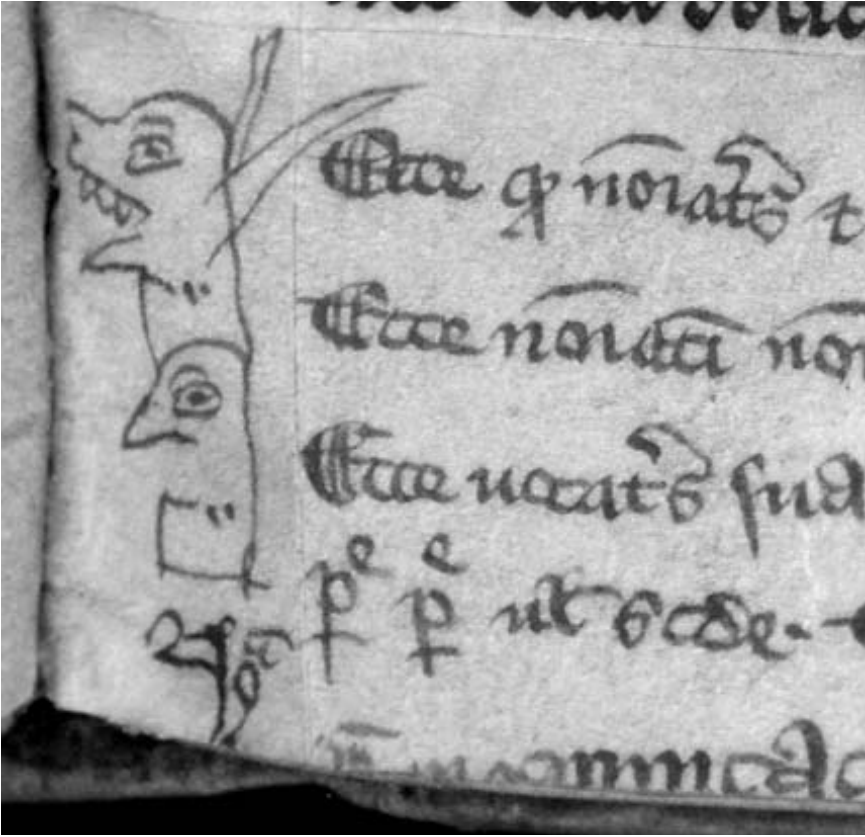


Figure 8.18. Cambridge, Trinity College MS O. 2. 51, f. 139r, Detail of Lower Margin, Sketch of Dragon Head Conjoined to Human Head, Priscian's *Grammar*. (By permission of the Master and Fellows of Trinity College Cambridge.)

open and vulnerable to attack.⁴⁹ The monstrous larva—which bursts from the stomach of Kane, played by John Hurt—was implanted in him by a pallid, crab-like creature. This monster is constantly transforming, growing, but also shifting and changing. And in this film we, as human beings, are reduced to little more than incubators and meat. Scott's powerful images, spawned in the dark mind of H. R. Giger—who won a much-deserved Academy Award in 1980 for visual effects—may serve to suggest the power, the visceral punch the illuminations in this manuscript might have had in their own time. Before film, before photography or even oil painting, the Anglo-Saxons had developed manuscript illumination to a degree of complexity and sophistication necessary to serve as a primary medium for the rich exploration of monsters.

Pollington, in connection with his study of Old English medical texts, comes to view Grendel in surprisingly similar terms. This unstable, shifting monster is, for him, a “noxious, parasitic infestation” in need of treatment. Pollington observes that Beowulf announces he has come to “cleanse” or “purify” Heorot.⁵⁰ Roy Porter argues that, for medieval philosophers and theologians, even a normal human body was bestial and suspect:

Its appetites and desires are seen as blind, wilful, anarchic or (within Christianity) radically sinful . . . Thus the body readily offends, committing evil or criminal acts. Yet, because of its very nature (being imperfect, even beast-like), it may, paradoxically, be readily excused.⁵¹

In the light of this notion, the process undergone by the man in the *Grammar* may be seen as much a revelation as a transformation, with his body—and by implication, the reader’s, as well—unveiling its true, monstrous nature. The human body, with its inner “circuitry of vibrant, pulsing life” is a natural analogue for these images, and so it is that we find humans intermingled with the beasts and plants in these images, teeming with all manner of life.⁵²

The resulting images are deeply hybrid, mingling men, beasts, monsters, plants and letters into clotted masses of energy and motion. Camille notes that text-image boundaries are particularly fluid in English art of the earlier periods.⁵³ In such images, the distinction between frame and image is eroded; we are not to project a fictive space behind frame, but rather, to understand the frame as a vital part of the image.⁵⁴ Since the monsters are not, in these initials, to be understood as existing behind a window or within a frame, as in the *Marvels of the East*, their space becomes continuous with our own. If they are not viewed as part of another place, another space, then they can only be seen as existing along with us. In the case of initial letters, the ‘frame’ is generally the letter, itself. However, in many of these initials, such as the ‘S’ of folio 9r of the *Grammar* (See Fig. 8.4), the monsters have infiltrated the very text they decorate, thereby embodying their texts. This assimilation of the monstrous body within central, even sacred texts can be traced beyond the Bosworth and Winchcombe Psalters to the renowned early masterworks of insular art, the astonishing Chi Rho pages of manuscripts such as the Book of Kells and the Lichfield Gospels. The Book of Kells has, itself, been described in monstrous terms as “a giant among giants.”⁵⁵ Its letters are filled with “human and animal bodies turning into or emerging from their traces before our eyes as their limbs, tongues, and ears elongate and twist around their bodies and intertwine with other body

traces.”⁵⁶ (See Chapter 9, Fig. 9.4) Through this process of distortion, men, beasts and letters are all rendered monstrous, now distorted by the sacred power of the divine text.

Inhabited initials are frequently included in discussions of marginalia. Writing about the Bury St. Edmunds Psalter, Robert Harris notes that “the draughtsman understood the region of the margin not as a boundary possessing fixed limits, but rather as an open area in which the energy of his forms can freely expand.”⁵⁷ And yet these images are not marginalia in any conventional sense. They form part of the text, and while they sometimes spill slightly out of the text block, they are not generally located within the margins. It may merit mention that the ‘V’ of Priscian’s *Grammar* (See Fig. 8.9) forms the first letter of *Verbum*, here “verb.” Still, the primary meaning of *verbum* is, of course, “word.” In this manner, the connection between the image and the text it forms is made more explicit. Michelle Brown notes that “a characteristic feature of Insular illumination is the integration of decoration, script and text.”⁵⁸ She and Alexander both locate the development of the decorated initial, itself, as well as the earliest examples of Western historiated initials to England.⁵⁹ It is not surprising that this form of illumination would have been created by the Anglo-Saxons, a hybrid society whose poetic language is celebrated for its kenning, its fabulous freedom in the creation of new, highly imaginative compounds.⁶⁰

Before leaving the wonderful Trinity manuscript of Priscian’s *Grammar*, I would like to propose a possible explanation for the presence of this surprisingly lively and exciting image sequence in such a dry text. Folio 9r contains an initial ‘S’ (See Fig. 8.4) which is, through the inclusion of a head at the apex, transformed into a dragon. Indeed, this is the dragon’s first entrance into the manuscript. Here, he is literally at one with the text of the *Grammar*; he is the text of the *Grammar*, and at his midpoint is a portrait roundel most likely intended to represent Priscian. Could it be that the dragon was intended to serve as a visual embodiment of this hulking, massive text, transforming Latin grammar into a monster needing to be conquered? Militant imagery was already familiar in monastic contexts, beginning with the Prologue to the *Benedictine Rule*, itself. Here, Benedict encourages his followers to “take up the most strong and noble weapons of obedience.”⁶¹ Peter Damian follows this rhetoric, ordering his followers to “take up the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God.”⁶² Monastic literature is replete with such examples, too numerous to count. A monk, used to seeing himself as a *miles Christi* or *metodes cempa*, a soldier of Christ, could have viewed the armed hero of this series as a surrogate for himself, as he battles with the dragon of Latin.⁶³

Stephen Morrison argues that these seemingly militant images are, of course, intended to inspire “passivity and patience,” which are the most powerful weapons of the *miles Christi*;⁶⁴ these virtues would be of great use to the student of Latin, as well. The language was at once sacred and, in the eleventh century, “much more foreign in its vocabulary and structure” to a speaker of Old English than it is to modern readers, to whom it nevertheless often seems “dead and arcane.”⁶⁵ Viewed in this manner, the eventual transformation of man into dragon can be seen in a positive light. Having battled his way through this massive text and, in doing so, having mastered Latin, he now wears the monstrous mantle of his victory.

Chapter Nine

Saints in the Margins

For the Anglo-Saxons, the risk of being transformed into a monster was not merely the subject of fiction or unrealized fears. As discussed in my fifth chapter, a number of Anglo-Saxon law codes prescribe mutilations for out-laws. *Edmund III*, for example, demands that a slave who commits theft should be scalped, and should have his little finger cut short to indicate his status as a criminal.¹ *Æthelred* called for the outright branding of slaves, convicted by process of the Ordeal.² Cnut—who called for his bishops to protect their flocks from “madly ravenous werewolves”—demanded that:

At the second occasion there may be no other compensation, if he is deemed guilty, other than that a man cut off his hands or feet, or both, in consideration of what the action may be. And if he then is found to have done greater deeds, then put out his eyes, and cut off his nose and ears and the upper lip or his scalp.³

Such punishments would not merely render the criminals visible, but would render them hideous, even grotesque. In this manner, the laws of the land would transform morally corrupt individuals into physically corrupt monsters. This renders physical the medieval notion that character manifested itself in appearance. The Middle High German *Genesis*, for example, in its discussion of Cain as the origin of the monstrous races, concludes “whatsoever inner nature the former had, such an outer nature the latter had to have.”⁴

However, criminals were not the only characters at risk of ‘monsterization.’ It seems that the opposite extremes of society were, as often is the case, conceptually linked, so that heroes and saints were likewise conjoined with monstrosity. We have already seen that saints and monsters both chose the dangerous or repellent zones, the deserts and fens, as their homes, and in this manner shared the experience of exile. For members of Anglo-Saxon society,

which was deeply communal, exile was a particularly harsh punishment. In the early Middle Ages, “banishment was strictly equivalent to exclusion. It replaced the taking of a person’s life, which had been considered compensation for the disturbance of sacral order.”⁵ As Hrafnhildur Bodvarsdottir observes, “*Maxims I* sums up the general Anglo-Saxon attitude towards exile”:

He is destitute who must live alone,
dwell friendless. Fate has chosen that for him.⁶

The greatest of all Anglo-Saxon literary monsters—Grendel and his mother—are frequently characterized as exiles.⁷ Described as “Cain’s kin,” they are linked with the Biblical outcast who, in Bede’s *Libri Quatuor in Genesim*, is described as exiled “in order that he should always be a wanderer and fugitive on this earth, and not dare to have a quiet habitation anywhere.”⁸ Grendel and his mother are similarly compared frequently with wolves which, in Anglo-Saxon poetry, are described as “haunting forests, marshes, rocky slopes, devouring human beings, exhibiting typical outcast qualities, and generally remaining savage and loathsome to man.”⁹

But why would sacred figures—like Guthlac, discussed in Chapter 1—choose to adopt this state, voluntarily? As Michael Goodich observes, such figures

whose marginality was temporary, voluntarily chose to place themselves outside civil society and reside on the geographical periphery. Forest, sea, mountain, and desert have traditionally been regarded as the sites of both devilish temptation and spiritual opportunity.¹⁰

It was in the crucible of the desert that the saint could be forged. Likewise, “exile was a common experience for reforming monks in the tenth century . . . Dunstan and Oswald both spent time in Frankish monasteries.”¹¹ For Eric John, Guthlac was a link between Bede and Beowulf, an ordinary warrior turned holy warrior.¹² As such, he provided Anglo-Saxon nobility with a new kind of hero to admire: the hermetic ‘warrior,’ now battling demons and devils, foes far greater than any mortal enemy.¹³ Guthlac and Edmund—the speaking cephalophore king—are not the only Anglo-Saxon saints to assume attributes of monstrosity. Bound with the *Life of Guthlac* in a late tenth- or early eleventh-century manuscript is an anonymous account of the life of Saint Dunstan, attributed to ‘Auctore B.’¹⁴ This text informs us that Dunstan was attacked by his political rivals:

And with his hands and feet bound, they threw him into a filthy fen at that place . . . Indeed, these dogs encountered that man with extreme harshness, and because he was befouled in filth, they thought that he was more monster than man; they attacked that man with cruel barking.¹⁵

Osbern's *Vita Sancti Dunstani* (*Life of Saint Dunstan*), which is clearly based on the Auctore B text, also depicts this moment.¹⁶ However, in this version, he is recognized by the dogs but not by the villagers of the town. Again, he is beset by his political opponents:

When that rival [Dunstan] had been found by those whose worth stood out on account of their shameless, the plotters blocked the path, they drove apart the allies, they threw down that horse; they struck at the supplicant; finally they cast him, ensnared with fetters, into a cistern that was nearby. Meanwhile, while being defended from the men who found him by a frightful throng of hounds, he was borne off to the village, fostered by the dogs' zeal and devotion. Then, that man, out of the depths of his heart, letting out a sigh, said, "O cruel madness of those near to me, acting with canine cruelty out of the altering of the affection of humanity; for, the irrational nature of the dogs delivered the affection of humanity, caressing me. Indeed, the men display severity to me, showing the nearness of their humanity to attacking dogs."¹⁷

Perhaps these passages might shed some light on an unusual pair of images used to introduce this text in its earliest surviving copy, a late-eleventh-century manuscript in the British Library.¹⁸ The first image is a small 'U,' presenting five figures: a haloed angel holding a book (presumably this manuscript); an angry, mustached soldier with a Norman hair-cut, his sword and shield raised either at the angel or at the dragon, opposite him; a dragon head, with a round dark-red object in his beak-like mouth, gazing upward, off the page; a more canine beast-head, on which the soldier stands; and the most puzzling figure, a very small, impish creature with the upper body of a man and the legs of a bird or beast, with large, claw-like feet. (Fig. 9.1) The area over and around his head is somewhat eroded, owing to the use of the pigment verdigris, a corrosive acetate of copper. As Daniel Thompson notes, "sometimes it has corroded the parchment, eaten into it, so that the painted parts actually drop out and leave gaps in the page."¹⁹ Very close examination seems to reveal that the small hybrid creature is wearing a tall helmet with long horns emerging from the sides, looking like the modern stereotype of a Viking.²⁰ His pose seems to mimic that of the angel. Like those of his



Figure 9.1. London, British Library, Arundel 16, f. 1, Universal Initial, Osbern's *Life of Saint Dunstan*. (By permission of the British Library.)

grander neighbor, his elbows are at his side and, although they appear to be empty, his hands are drawn together across his chest. His head, like the angel's, is turned slightly to his left and his gaze is cast farther leftward. While

his lower half is uncovered, his upper half seems to be clothed in voluminous robes similar to those of the angel. Though the initial is now badly worn and somewhat difficult to discern in all its details, it is clear that a great deal of care was expended in its creation, so it would be unwise to dismiss it as a hasty doodle, a mere 'drôlerie.' Indeed, none of the sources that discuss this manuscript gives more than a brief comment in passing. It must be recalled that Dunstan, the saint whose life is introduced by this turbid mass of monsters, was a major saint in this period. He was "the favorite saint of the mother Church of England for more than a century and a half."²¹

Osbern's *Life of Saint Dunstan* was written in circumstances meriting mention. Osbern was an Anglo-Saxon monk, writing at the very outset of the Anglo-Norman period. The unsettled years of Æthelred, Cnut and his sons, and the Norman Conquest, a period referred to by William Stubbs as "years of trouble and humiliation" for the Anglo-Saxons, set the stage for patriotic nostalgia which was manifested in a resurgence of interest in local saints.²² The angel seems very protective of the book he holds, looking over at the Norman knight suspiciously. This is a text very much about the value of the Anglo-Saxon past, being too rapidly forgotten by the conquering Normans and the conquered Anglo-Saxons.

The figures in the decorated initial might be taken—like those from the third image of *Grammar*, with its humans, beast, dragon and foliage—to represent the main categories of life, as recognized by the medieval English. (See Chapter 8, Fig. 8.4) The letter's inhabitants provide a warrior for humans, the dog-head for animals, the dragon for monsters, and the impish (perhaps elfish?) figure as a hybrid, which was certainly a major and important variety of life. The initial even expands these divisions by providing an angel to represent the divine. It is therefore interesting to note that these figures are all in slight, delicate contact with one another, forming an interconnected ring; beginning in the upper left corner, the dragon's beak rests gently on the angel's halo suggesting (as did the similarly delicate contact between Eden and the monstrous toad on the Hereford Map, discussed in Chapter 3) the kinship between the monster and the divine.²³ Working clockwise, the angel's wing overlaps the soldier's shield and its wingtip just brushes his tunic. The soldier in turn stands just above the dog-head, with one foot on one of its ears. Arcing around the base of the letter, we return to the impish figure, whose clawed foot oversteps the angel's right wing, which in turn imbricates its shoulder. The segment between the impish figure's head and the collar from which the dragon's head emerges is now lost, but it seems likely this was an empty green field, or it would most likely not have been so thoroughly consumed by the corrosion of the verdigris. Still, the letter itself,

which also formed the connection between the dog-head and the impish figure, could be said to create the link between him and the dragon. Given the animation of letters in the manuscripts discussed above, as well as the status of the Word as the incarnation of Christ, it is by no means an exaggeration to consider the text itself as a living entity, deserving of inclusion in this system. It is a chain of gently interlocking and overlapping gestures and contacts, all of which combine to render the world—natural, human, monstrous and divine—as one interconnected universe in which all these forms of life are equally possible.

A brief examination of the text introduced by this initial lends support to this theory. The initial is the ‘U’ of *Universis*, that is, “all together, collective, universal,” marking the beginning of the prologue to the *Life of Saint Dunstan*.²⁴ We must remember that the Christian universe alluded to here contains within it all aspects of life; just as the universal creation-diagrams of Hereford, Ebstorf and the Psalter map include England, holy Jerusalem, the Garden of Eden, and the monstrous races, so it is appropriate that this tiny image of *Universis* contains them all, as well. This notion is further bolstered by Budny and Graham’s observation of the numerous similarities between this manuscript and that of Priscian’s *Grammar*, discussed above: “Both initials share dog-like animal headed terminals, creatures with long ears and spotted bodies, branching and scrolling foliage, striped panels, and trellis-like borders beyond which their inhabitants extend.”²⁵ In addition to these formal similarities, the images in both manuscripts seem to suggest interests in the categories of life, and in various forms of hybridity, through which they are blended.

The second and final image in this manuscript is on the following folio. (Fig. 9.2) The initial ‘R’ is more than twice the size of the preceding initial and contains an even more exuberant array of figures. It is in better condition, with a lovely, gentle palette of washes, carefully balanced to produce a harmonious composition slightly at odds with the chaos of the imagery. The primary subject of the image is Osbern, clearly labeled in a white ribbon to the right.²⁶ The author-portrait is flanked by a man swinging a censer, a lion, a dog or dragon with human hands, sitting upright and playing a harp, and a handful of other monsters and monster-heads. Below Osbern are a number of other monsters and beasts, one of which is yet again entangled in foliage. Even the arms of Osbern’s chair end in animal heads.

The lion’s profile is rather human. Over its left shoulder is a highly stylized object, likely either a wing or a shield. This is filled in with the same green as the text immediately to the right of the lion’s head, which reads “REGE ÆTHELSTANO,” that is, “King Æthelstan.” It therefore seems



Figure 9.2. London, British Library, Arundel 16, f. 2, Author Portrait with Censing Acolyte and Beasts, Osbern's *Life of Saint Dunstan*. (By permission of the British Library.)

quite possible to interpret this regal king of the animals, with his human face, as a symbolic representation of the “magnificent king of the English,” referred to in this opening passage.²⁷ It was at Æthelstan’s famed court that Dunstan learned poetry and music sung to the harp, which is alluded to by the hybrid harpist on the other side of the initial. The harpist could easily resonate as a reference to the renowned musical skill of both Osbern and Dunstan, and perhaps might even call to mind the miracle of the harp playing itself on Dunstan’s wall.²⁸ In the nostalgic context of this text, we can stretch further, and hazard that the monstrous harping figure, with its mouth wide open as if in song, who carefully adjusts a tuning peg between the thumb and forefinger of his left hand, at the outset of this text—written by an Anglo-Saxon monk and glorifying an Anglo-Saxon saint—might even

remind its readers of the *scop*, the harping-bearing teller of great tales, such as we find immortalized in *Beowulf*.²⁹ In this context, the harping figure might, like so many other images in monastic art of the period, have been intended to call attention to the text. It functions not only to remind the reader of the musical skill of author and subject, but also as a visual equivalent of the *scop*'s "*Hwæt*" with which *Beowulf*, itself, begins.³⁰

The figure of Oswald likewise seems to suggest orality. Although he is holding a scroll, it is blank. He does not hold his pen between his thumb and forefinger, as in most medieval images of writing. (Fig. 9.3) Rather, he holds it between his first and second fingers in a manner which does not seem at all conducive to writing. Were the red pen absent, we would not hesitate to identify this as the codified medieval gesture—hand outstretched with the first two fingers extended—of speech. This text, like all monastic texts in the early Middle Ages, would not have been read silently but rather, would have been transformed from a written text into oral speech by the reader. For Jean Leclercq, reading aloud produced "a muscular memory of the words pronounced and an aural memory of the words heard," through which the human reader gives the text a body, much as the monsters do.³¹ This subtle gesture seems to invoke orality, to encourage the monastic reader to translate



Figure 9.3. London, British Library, Royal 10. A.xiii, f. 2r, Dunstan Writing, Commentary on the Rule of Saint Benedict. (By permission of the British Library.)

this manuscript into the performative act of speech. With both the *scop*-harpist and the gesturing figure of Osbern as models, the reader is invited to clear his own throat and begin the text with the very 'R' that contains them both.

Budny and Graham note that these monstrous and bestial figures are not illustrations of the text, and that they do not correspond directly with any of the numerous monster-filled passages within it.³² They offer the following explanation for the presence of the harpist:

The zoanthropomorphic figure playing the harp in the Arundel 16 initial also belongs to a recognized genre at Christ Church. Animal musicians appear both in manuscript initials and on stone capitals in Anselm's crypt at the cathedral . . . The harp-playing zoanthropomorphic figure could well refer to Osbern's musical activities. It could also allude to Dunstan's.³³

While this observation offers a source for this image, or at least situates it in a particular context, it nonetheless raises a further question: Why did the monks at Christ Church routinely use animals and hybrid animal-men to convey a musical performance? Do they refer to texts, like *The Golden Ass*?³⁴ Or do they mock the music-making? This seems unlikely, since both Osbern and Dunstan were acclaimed musicians. Or was it simply a fortuitous choice, since monsters formed such a considerable part of the Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman understanding of their world that they were likely to penetrate into all areas of human endeavor? Any of these are possible, but I would offer another possibility; perhaps, living in the 'deserts' and 'wilds' of England, surrounded by forests and fens filled with monsters, the monks felt a kinship with their fellow *mearcstapan* (border-walkers) who, in the initial serve to support the monastic author, to glorify and accompany him musically. These monsters have become part of Osbern's retinue, helping to celebrate Dunstan's sanctity. Budny and Graham note that "the comical part-human, part-animal figure with a harp in the same initial extends the musical sphere by mixing terrestrial life, both human and animal, with celestial harmony."³⁵ In this manner, the illuminator has granted the monster a taste of the divine.

Perhaps this also has relevance for the small, censing figure reaching beyond the lobe of the 'R.' This clean-shaven and untonsured figure, performing a menial but clerical role is most likely a youthful acolyte.³⁶ Budny and Graham argue:

The position of the censer suggests that the act of writing itself is being censed, just as the drawn curtain suggests the unveiling of a holy scene to the initiated beholder . . . The parted curtain and censer in the initial

endow the depiction of Osbern at work on his text with an aura of sanctity and ritual . . . Osbern's act is depicted as a sacred, worthy task.³⁷

His censer is certainly aimed at Osbern and his task of writing, and yet the incense it emits would have drifted outward, over the dragons above and the hybrid harpist to the left, before settling down on the myriad beasts below. As the angels censuring Christ at the top of the Psalter Map bless all creation, from Britain in the north to the *blemmyes* in the south, so too this figure censures all aspects of creation, human, animal, monstrous and foliate.

On the other hand, according to Bald's *Leechbook*, the earliest complete Old English medical text to have survived, censurers could be used to dispel evil.³⁸ Filled with incense, the censor is to be used in conjunction with the singing of masses and the ingestion of medicinal herbs to treat *ælfadde*, a condition of elf-sickness or "nightmare," connected to *ælfside*, discussed above.³⁹ Perhaps the censor in the image is intended to drive away the mass of monsters around Osbern. With this medical cure in mind, it may not be a coincidence that the strange, hybrid, humanoid, perhaps elfish figure, present on the preceding folio, has been banished from this image.

If a much-celebrated saint like Dunstan could be transformed so that he appeared "more monster than man," what might happen to ordinary men, to the readers of these texts and viewers of these images?⁴⁰ As discussed above, they were at constant risk of transformation into the monsters they feared. Elves shooting poisoned darts, dragons with apparently infectious bites and judges meting out mutilation could all reduce a man to a monster. But what about the reverse situation? If men might become monsters and, as with Grendel's approach to Heorot, monsters might occasionally become men, might not men also occasionally improve themselves, and in doing so, become part of the divine? A brief examination of a few more images suggests that sacred texts possessed the power to transform men's bodies for the better.

MONSTROUS DEPORTMENT

Several scholars have observed the wildly transformative nature of medieval English illumination. Alexander notes:

Initials produced in the British Isles during the seventh and eighth centuries [exhibit] the principle of metamorphosis by which one form can merge with and turn into another, resulting in a constant ambiguity and uncertainty.⁴¹

Alexander sees early Insular images as being full of “kinetic energy” with forms that are “constantly changing both in direction and identity.”⁴² Cohen notes that “writers and artists in early medieval England were fascinated by the grotesque and the marvelous. Their literature, historiography, manuscript illustration, and plastic arts reveal a cultural obsession with the malleability of the human form.”⁴³ Certainly, several of the texts and images discussed above would support these notions, but I would like to discuss another, final aspect of initial lettering. In addition to the host of men battling and becoming monsters, we also find a variety of men whose monstrosity consists of their violently contorted positioning. Such imagery must be set in context. When Alcuin was at the Carolingian court, he quoted Cicero on “bodily moderation”:

I have said that it is necessary to observe that the face is straight, that the lips are not twisted, nor the mouth immoderately opened, nor the face stretched backward, nor the eyes cast down to the ground, nor the neck bowed, nor the eyebrows raised up or lowered.⁴⁴

It seems as if one would need Botox treatment truly to achieve this transcendently passive and restrained deportment. If this were an ideal, the images of distorted bodies, bending and twisting all over their pages would have seemed even more immoderate to medieval eyes than they do to the modern viewer. Carl Nordenfalk points out that in the Book of Kells, not only animals but also humans are “behaving like contortionists.”⁴⁵ In some of these images, letters are composed of complete human bodies, with no additional plant or animal parts, and thus seem far less monstrous than other images. (Fig. 9.4) However, in their extreme contortion, they take on new varieties of deformity. Gerald’s figures are deformed owing to the wickedness and moral corruption of their race, but the Kells figures are anonymous. What, then, is the origin of their deformity? Are they mere drolleries, as Nordenfalk would have it?⁴⁶ This seems unlikely in a presentation volume as grand and glorious, as painstakingly planned and executed as the Book of Kells. I see these human figures as deformed by the sacred power of the text they help to form. Perhaps this is an explanation for the frequent presentation of these figures as ‘tongue-tied’; on folio 53 verso, for example, the figure’s tongue extends downward from his mouth to coil around his distorted, elongated body. In the center of his triangular trunk, his tongue forms a knot. Perhaps human speech is failing, wholly inadequate in comparison with the divine text of the Gospel he twists himself to form. Indeed, with his foot pressed to his own throat, this wide-eyed man seems to be strangling himself, desperate to keep his own voice from polluting the holy text.



Figure 9.4. Dublin, Trinity College Library, A. I. 6, f. 53v, Initial of Tongue-Tied Man, the Book of Kells. (By permission Trinity College, Dublin.)

Not all the human figures in the initials of the Book of Kells are tongue-tied and twisted in knots. The Argumentum of Matthew opens with a large, colorful, interlace-filled 'M.' (Fig. 9.5) Capping the central minim at its top and bottom are the head and feet of a human figure, starring directly out at the viewer. This figure is likely a representation of Matthew, as it has been identified by Françoise Henry.⁴⁷ Indeed, it forms the first letter of the



Figure 9.5. Dublin, Trinity College Library, A. I. 6, f. 12r, Initial of Saint Matthew, Argumentum of Matthew, the Book of Kells. (By permission Trinity College, Dublin.)

evangelist's own name. Unlike the anonymous, tortured figure of folio 53 verso, Matthew stands erect. He is depicted frontally, straightforward and unconflicted. Although the stylization of the figure makes it uncertain, it is possible that the illuminator has depicted this figure with his mouth open, allowing him to speak where the other figures were silenced.

While a spectacular example, the Book of Kells is by no means unique in its use of human figures not merely within its initials, but functioning as their structural framework. In Oxford, Bodleian MSS Tanner 10, a number of the initials are formed of familiar foliate monsters resembling those in the Junius Psalter, discussed above.⁴⁸ However, other initials in this tenth-century manuscript of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* contain human figures, intertwined with the biting beasts and their foliage. (Fig. 9.6) On four folios of this account of the history of the English people, humans rather than beasts and monsters twist and bend themselves in order to convey the text.⁴⁹ Medieval scribes routinely turned text into bodies.⁵⁰ Of course, they also wrote on bodies, with materials made of other bodies. In this context, all medieval texts seem to come to life, to become animate. The medieval illuminators responsible for



Figure 9.6. Oxford, Bodley MS Tanner 10, f. 115v, Initials of Men and Beasts, Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*. (By permission of the Bodleian Library, the University of Oxford.)

the images discussed here consciously embody their texts, turning the visual symbols of writing into writhing creatures and struggling men. Still, as James Elkins writes, “every picture is a picture of the body. Every work of visual art is a representation of the body. To say this is to say that we see bodies, even

where there are none.”⁵¹ Given the power attributed to the text in the Middle Ages, it is particularly appropriate that such images should serve to embellish a text by Bede, who wrote one of the rare Anglo-Saxon defenses of images. In his *De templo* (*On the Temple*), Bede commends images because they make things live; he refers to the story of Moses and the Brazen Serpent, in which the prophet makes life out of inanimate objects.⁵² In this passage, Bede effectively reverses Gregory the Great’s famous stance, which was to turn images into texts; Bede, in contrast, would turn images into life.⁵³

Another manuscript of the Old English translation of Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History* will serve as my last point of discussion. In Cambridge, Corpus Christi College Library MS 41, an eleventh-century manuscript “with numerous additions of the first and second halves of the century,” we find a number of animated initials.⁵⁴ This manuscript is illustrated in full in Mildred Budny’s *Insular, Anglo-Saxon, and Early Anglo-Norman Manuscript Art at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge*.⁵⁵ In content and composition, the initials encompass many of the varieties of initial discussed above: small beast heads appended to letters and nascent bits of foliage, dragons sprouting foliage, beast trapped in monstrous vines, and twisted, strangled human figures.⁵⁶ In this manner, the manuscript as a whole works to encompass the various categories of life we found in the manuscripts of Priscian’s *Grammar* and Osbern’s *Life of Dunstan*. The *Grammar*, a secular text, contains images of plants, animals, monsters and men. The initials in the *Life of Dunstan*—a text detailing the experiences of one of the foremost Anglo-Saxon saints—adds an angel, and thereby a celestial being, to this system. The illuminator of the Corpus Christi manuscript of Bede’s *History*, one of the most important texts of any kind to survive the Anglo-Saxon period, takes the final step in this process, employing symbols of Christ himself to form some of the initials. A few of the initials are Old English eths (Ð) which, unlike similar ‘D’s, require that their bows connect not with simple minims, but rather, with crosses. (Fig. 9.7) As Evelyn Edson observes, medieval Christians “could hardly look at two crossed sticks without thinking of the cross of Christ.”⁵⁷ Still, the illuminator of these initials seems to have consciously enhanced their connection with the holy cross, providing central bosses where the arms meet, and flaring the arms outward toward their ends. This was not uncommon; scribes often turned letters into crosses, and thereby included Christ within their texts.⁵⁸ The foliate ends may refer to the tradition of the ‘tree of life,’ popular in Anglo-Saxon art. The cross-like nature of this initial is further supported by the presence in the margin of this folio, directly adjacent to the ‘Ð,’ of a prayer to the cross. On the other hand, the monsters that form the bow of the ‘Ð’ on page 268 of the manuscript, like so many others,

also terminate in foliage.⁵⁹ (Fig. 9.8) As a corollary to my argument that such foliage conveyed the dangers of the world, there could be a plausible connection between the monsters and the cross, the instrument of Christ's death and symbol of his sacrificial suffering.

At the beginning of Bede's Book V, Chapter XIII, the illuminator created a particularly remarkable 'Ð' for "Dyssum tidum," (At this time . . .).⁶⁰ (Fig. 9.9) The bow of the 'Ð' is formed by three monsters. From the base of the letter, upward, a bestial mask head sprouts a foliate dragon's tail from the top of its head. This dragon in turn is either vomiting up or swallowing down a second dragon. This is merely a variation on the formula seen elsewhere. However, it is in the cross of the 'Ð' that this letter stands apart. The other 'Ð's seem to imply the presence of Christ through the fairly omnipresent sign of the cross; this image is far more explicit. The illuminator has chosen to present the cross of the 'Ð' as a full crucifixion. The bars of the cross have been widened, and the figure of Christ hangs, limp and dead, from four nails. This is something of a transitional Crucifixion, neither the living and triumphant Christ of the early Middle Ages nor quite the tortured and broken Christ of the later Middle Ages. As such, it is a fitting image with which to conclude this study, which has been situated at the transition between early and high, between Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman. Above Christ, on the upper arm of the cross, is the hand of God, reaching down to bless his dead son. Budny notes that "the scene of the Crucifixion, which prefigures the Resurrection, may relate to the text. The chapter recounts Drythelm's return to life at dawn after his overnight death and vision of the afterlife."⁶¹

Returning to the attendant monsters, both the mask face at the base and the dragon at the top seem to reach out with their tongues to lick at the holy cross. How are we to interpret this unusual motif? Are the monsters attacking the Crucifixion, tasting it before they bite? Or are they expressing affection, licking their Lord as a dog licks its owner? To the right of this initial, in the horizontal gap in the text block, are three ghostly dragons, drawn in drypoint and just visible in raking light.⁶² One beast mimics the pose of the upper dragon within the letter, suggesting that it is a later addition. In place of the small fang or tongue, this dragon has a larger, slightly foliate projection which is certainly not a tooth and may very well be a tongue. The second drypoint dragon is very faint, but seems to have a long neck, stretched out, and a wing folded over its back. The third dragon is lighter still, but was also observed by Budny in her catalogue.⁶³ These three additional dragons increase the monstrous context for this small crucifixion.

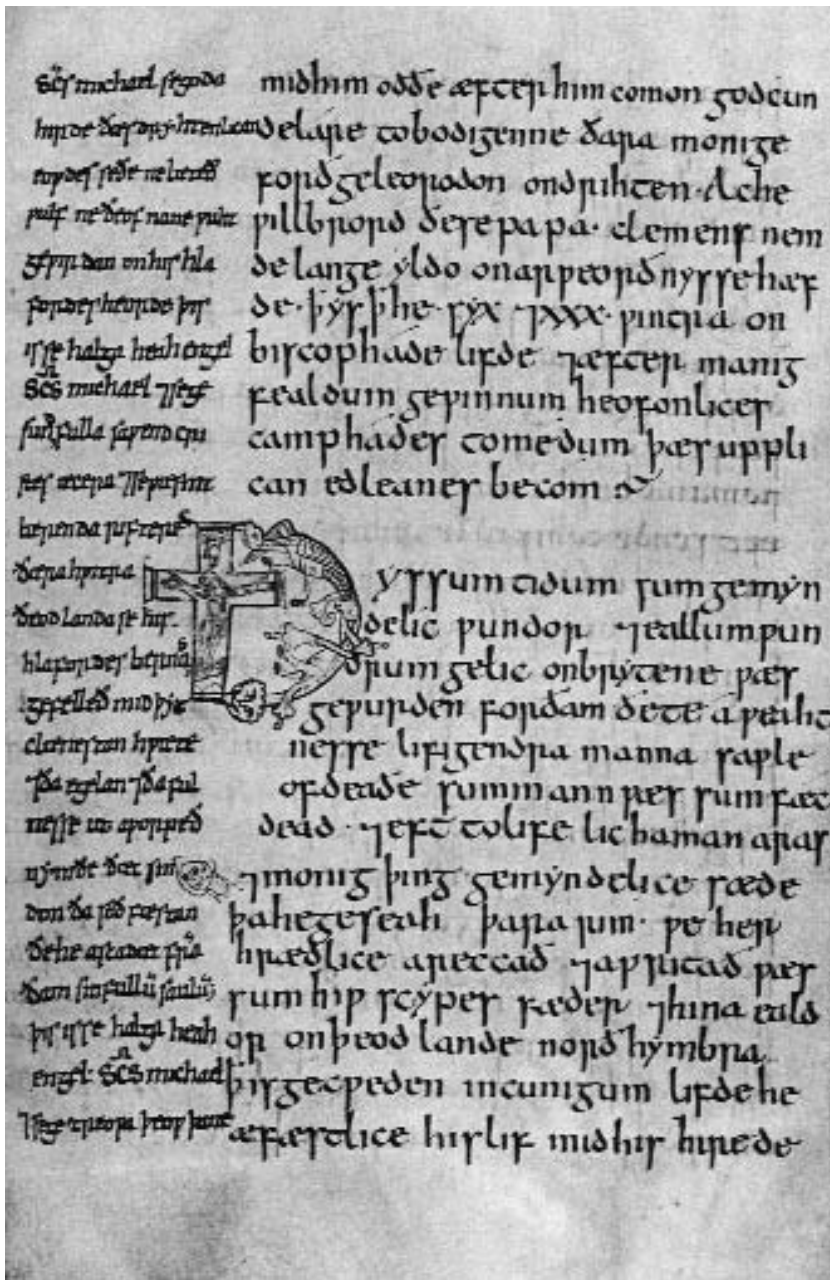


Figure 9.9. Cambridge, Corpus Christi College Library MS 41, p. 410, Initial D with Dragons and Crucifixion, Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*. (By permission of the Master and Fellows of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.)

Perhaps we can connect this initial to the panel of 'Christ and the Beasts' on the Ruthwell Cross. (See Chapter 7, Fig. 7.11) In this image, two beasts stretch their heads forward to allow Christ to stand on their snouts. It is an image of the submission of the natural world—and, as I have argued elsewhere, the pagan world—to the power of Christ.⁶⁴ The dragon and monster head on this 'D' may be doing likewise. Alternatively, if we are to accept the connection between the cross and the beasts, both of which terminate with foliate swirls on page 268, then perhaps the monsters' homage is directed not at Christ, but at the cross which caused his suffering. This initial seems to resonate with several possible meanings which, while perhaps contradictory, are nonetheless simultaneously plausible.

EMBODIED TEXT

Caroline Walker Bynum has commented that, in much modern writing about bodies in the Middle Ages, "the body dissolves into language. The body that eats, that works, that dies, that is afraid—that body just isn't there."⁶⁵ She argues against this trend, asserting that, for medieval people, the body could not have dissolved into language as it has for modern theorists.⁶⁶ For Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman authors and illuminators, the reverse seems more likely. In the images discussed throughout this chapter, language frequently dissolves into bodies—human and animal bodies, as well as fanged, clawed, foliage-exuding monstrous bodies. These bodies contort themselves wildly in order to bring their texts to life, and yet, in doing so, they occasionally are given too much leeway for the important purpose of textual clarity.⁶⁷ In their exuberance, they occasionally obscure the text they are intended to embellish. An 'A' in the twelfth-century Gospels discussed above (London, British Library, Royal 1. B.XI), for example, is all but impossible to read within the tangled mass of creatures whose ostensible purpose is to form it. (Fig. 9.10) In this instance, the image seems to work in ironic opposition to the context. This explosively turbulent incipit marks the opening of the letter of Eusebius, explaining his canon tables. This early concordance or finding aid, devised to guide readers topically through the four Gospels, was intended to provide a simple and logical means of working through the Gospels liturgically, rather than chronologically and sequentially.⁶⁸ However, as modern students have often found, the canon tables are complex and difficult to the point of being relatively useless. Nonetheless, until the construction of the Sacramentary, they remained the standard system.⁶⁹ The illuminator or designer of this manuscript has therefore made one of two decisions. Either, like the designer of the *Grammar*, he has juxtaposed



Figure 9.10. London, British Library, Royal 1. B. xi, f. 5r, Tangled Monstrous Initial, Letter of Eusebius, Gospel Book. (By permission of the British Library.)

chaos with order, thereby highlighting both the challenge undertaken and the success achieved by Eusebius; or, with a more wry twist, perhaps he has presented his own view of this convoluted system of names and chapters and events. In either case, the image works to conceal rather than to reveal the text.

And yet, it cannot be doubted that the medieval English considered texts to be of great value and power. The evidence for the value of manuscripts is vast, but a few relevant examples will suffice, here. In the twelfth-century manuscript of Jerome's *Commentaries*, Cambridge, Trinity O. 4. 7—a manuscript which bears strong stylistic connections with this Gospel Book⁷⁰—we can read of the value of holy Scripture:

For, indeed, we are lowly and poor, and we neither have riches nor are we worthy to receive that which has been offered: and thus they should know that it is not possible to hold familiarity with the Scriptures—that is, the riches of Christ—as equal to the riches of the world.⁷¹

Jerome, whose work was held in the highest esteem throughout the Middle Ages, chose to place this notion at the forefront of his work, explaining the value of his own text by extolling the supreme value of knowledge of the Scriptures. Similarly, in their insightful analysis of the initials in the manuscript of Osbern's *Life of Dunstan*, Budny and Graham argue that the acolyte is censuring "the act of writing itself," thereby treating this act with the same reverence shown for the mass.⁷² Just as Bede's account of the poet Cædmon recognized all Old English poetry as miraculous, so too this scene constructs all writing as sacred, not just Scripture but, as in this case, an account of a saint's life.

Why, then, should monsters be allowed to overtake the text, to embody it with such vivacity that its own substance is subsumed and occasionally even lost? Kendrick argues that "living" initials activate and empower the text as we read:

By depicting letters in the act of moving, growing, or struggling the medieval designers of sacred texts presented alphabetic writing as a living force, mythologized it as a natural trace or manifestation, not primarily of themselves, but of God.⁷³

This seems correct, insofar as the world maps and texts discussed in my second chapter clearly include monsters and marvels within God's creation and view them as assertions of his omnipotence. However, Kendrick's analysis seems to render this system as more sacred than I believe it was. Looking at the snarling mass of creatures that tear and bite at one another in the 'A' from the Trinity Gospels, I find it difficult to find in it an affirmation of the presence of God. Rather, in the presence of these monsters, I would read the presence of monsters. They were an active part of the world of the creators of these manuscripts, and seem to have infiltrated almost every area of thought, writing and image production.

According to Seth Lerer, for the Anglo-Saxons, "writing, in the end, becomes the way in which humans become more human."⁷⁴ I would rather say that writing, like all aspects of Anglo-Saxon life, provided a space for interactions and transformations. People certainly do assert their differences from the beasts and monsters through the act of writing itself and yet many Anglo-Saxon texts and images work to erode the divide. Camille, who routinely included initials in his discussions of marginalia, described the margins as a space for intercourse between flesh and spirit.⁷⁵ For the Anglo-Saxons, the frontier between body and soul was fluid, like that which divided man from monster. Grendel, for example, is described as a spirit on a

number of occasions, but his physicality is asserted with violent emphasis, transforming on his voyage from the fens to Heorot from a *sceadugenga* (mover-in-the-shadows) who *scriðan cwoman* (came gliding) into a *manscaða* (enemy), and then finally into a *rinc* (man or warrior), the term used within the very same passage to describe Beowulf.⁷⁶

Michel Feher argues, in his introduction to *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, that our examination of the bodies of others is, in actuality, an examination of our own bodies:

In looking at the relations between human and divine bodies, or human and animal or mechanical bodies, [we] seek not to understand how we view them, but how we view our human bodies, with these as our points of reference.⁷⁷

In Husserlian analysis, focused on the ‘lived-body,’ we understand the phenomena of the world through our sense of touch; thus, if we only had sight, we would never know the body as a lived-body.⁷⁸ Unlike most works of art, manuscripts are made to be touched, held and handled, and so our knowledge of them is more intimate, more physical. The hybrid initials—as well as the stories of transformation and the medical texts discussing treatments for dangerous substances sent into men by elves, dwarfs, demons and witches—conspire to create a notion of the human body as permeable and therefore unstable. These images and texts may emanate from the human fear of devolution into beasts.⁷⁹ The human body, somewhere between animal, monster and God, was, like Britain, a liminal space which had the potential to incorporate monstrous forms. In her effort to read sacred metaphors into all aspects of Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman lettering, Kendrick asserts that the prevalence of vines in these images may be accounted for by reference to John 15:1: “I am the true vine.”⁸⁰ In light of the dragons, which are at once the source and embodiment of these vines, Kendrick’s assertion seems less than persuasive. Rather than finding sacred metaphors in the tumultuous, ensnaring foliage, vomited from the throats of dragons—and in these dragons and hybrids, themselves—I would view them as an expression and reminder of the dangers of the natural world, ever-present not only at the other end of the globe, but just outside the door.

Conclusion

Dwelling in the Monster

Living as they did, at the edge of the inhabitable world, the medieval English were very concerned with limits and boundaries. Their texts and images demonstrate a focus not only on the borders of the earth, of towns, even of individual bodies, but also on the borders of images and pages, which would result in the eventual English efflorescence of visual marginalia. Now, at the final boundary of this text, one frame seems of particular significance. On folio 14r of the *Hexateuch*—one of the most significant works to survive the Anglo-Saxon period, with approximately 400 images and “one of the first extended projects of translation of the Bible in a European vernacular”¹—we find an image of Noah’s Ark. (Fig. 1) Above, God explains to Noah the specifications of the ark. It must be three hundred cubits long, fifty wide and thirty high, with a window at the apex and a door and three decks, all of which are clearly present in the image, below.²

This ark is, however, no mere boat. The illuminator has added particular touches that localize the ship, tying it to his own region. From the prow springs a lively dragon-head, with a curling blue mane and its mouth open wide. The stern has been transformed into a broad, flat tail, perhaps more like that of a fish than a dragon. As a result, the whole boat has become animate. Karen Olsen notes that “the depiction of the ship as a beast” in Old English and Old Norse poetry is quite common, with the sea-horse as the most frequently used metaphor.³ The term more frequently used in the Old English compounds is *hengest* (horse) which, it will be recalled, was also the name of the mythical founder of Anglo-Saxon England.⁴ This visual image, like many others, does not present a sea-horse but rather, a mighty sea-dragon, though it is somewhat equine in its features.

C. R. Dodwell and Ruth Mellinkoff argue that Scandinavian influences may account for the serpent-head on the ark.⁵ Surviving examples of actual Scandinavian ships of the Early Middle Ages feature dragon carvings



Figure 1. London, British Library, Cotton Claudius B.iv, f. 14r, Noah's Ark, the *Hexateuch*. (By permission of the British Library.)

at their prows, and on separate posts and copper vanes, “decorated with zoomorphic figures, which would also have been set at the ship’s prow.”⁶ Dodwell rightly notes that “it needs little perception to see that [the *Hexateuch*’s] ships, decorated with dragon-heads at the bow and stern, reproduce

those used in northern Europe in the 11th century.”⁷ Still, Olsen notes regarding animate ships in Old English and Old Norse poetry that while “the Anglo-Saxon scop worked under sociocultural conditions very different from those of the Norse poet . . . of course, sea-travel was an important aspect of Anglo-Saxon society as well.”⁸ It ought be recalled that the Anglo-Saxons were, like the Scandinavians with whom they shared much of their mythology, a sea-faring culture. Boats played vital roles not only in their commerce and warfare, but also in their poetic works, such as “The Seafarer” and “The Wanderer,” as well as their spiritual life; boats as burial structures, such as were found at Sutton Hoo, indicate that these vessels were more than simple conveyances to their owners.

Perhaps it is only the effect of survival records that results in the assumption that Scandinavian ships inspired such beast-heads; perhaps the presence of Cnut in the north influenced Anglo-Saxon ships. Beast-heads appear on ships in the contemporary Bayeux Tapestry (Fig. 2) as well as in the Bodley manuscript, in a representation of the Argo from a series of constellations that precedes the *Marvels of the East*.⁹ It seems unlikely that the English illuminators and embroiderers were seeking to present images of Scandinavian boat designs, rather than what they perceived as ‘local’ ones.

Regardless of origin, this is only a partial explanation. Tracing the general source of this style of boat does not explain why the illuminator chose to use this style here. The “dragon-ship” has been incorporated into a new context.¹⁰ The ark is a vital portion of the Christian narrative, which here springs to monstrous life. In fact, as the reader turns the pages, the head on the ark moves, twisting and turning from scene to scene as it sails on.

Inside the ark are all manner of creatures, at least somewhat recognizable. The lower register is occupied, it would seem, by ruminants—varieties of oxen, cattle and sheep—arranged two-by-two. The middle deck of the ark is filled with birds, some dramatically long-beaked and snake-necked. The top deck contains Noah, clearly labeled, with his three sons to the right and their wives to the left.

Surrounding these pairs of beasts, birds and humans, who represent all that remain of terrestrial life, is a yellow frame. In their introduction to *Framing Medieval Bodies*, Sara Kay and Miri Ruben speak of the various frames, or “intellectual conceptualisations” through which we experience our bodies, not only “biological, anatomical and material” but also “psychic, sexual, social and political.”¹¹ The bodies of the *Hexateuch* are constantly being framed and reframed, bursting from and spilling over frames. Indeed, it is the irregularity of framing devices that prevents scholars from agreeing on exactly how many images the manuscript contains. The frames in this manuscript are therefore

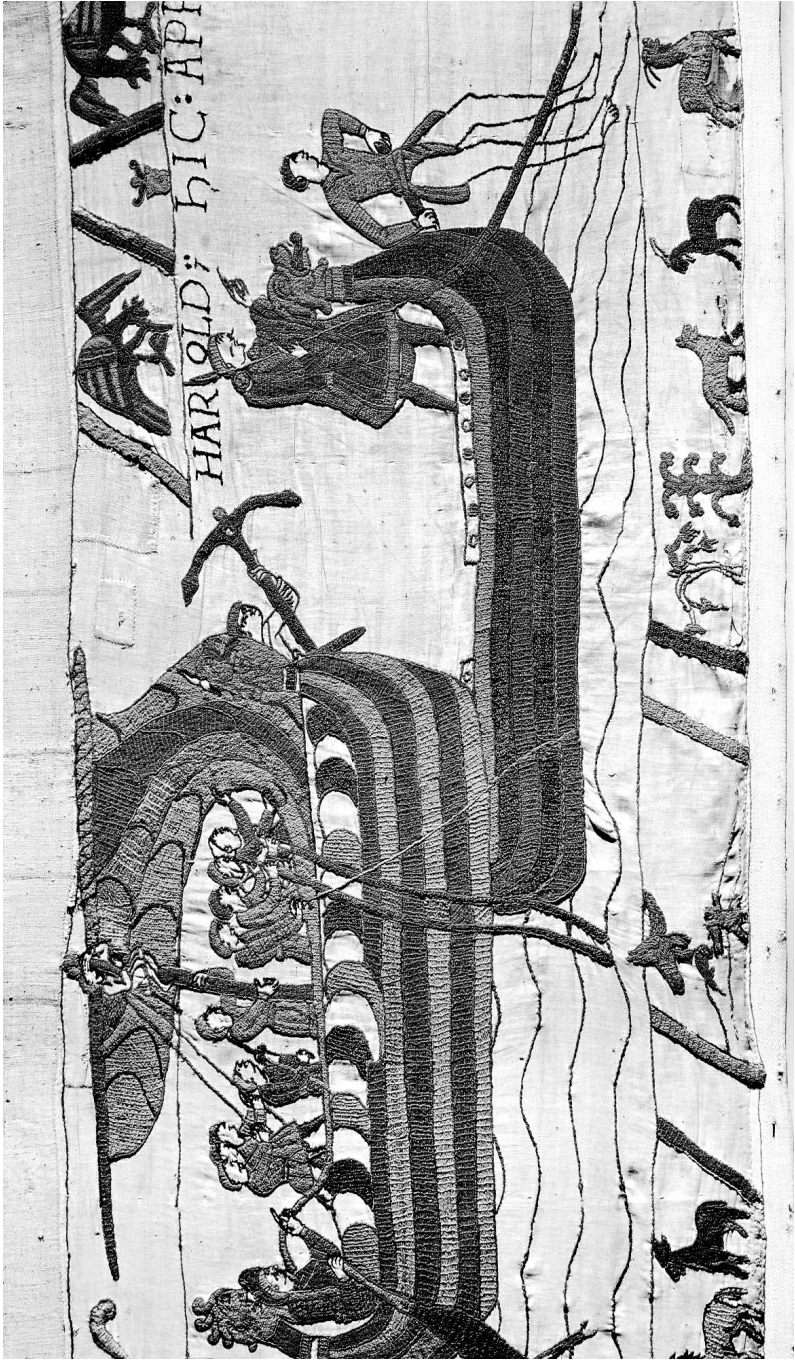


Figure 2. The Bayeux Tapestry, the English Landing in Normandy. (By permission of Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY.)

of great interest, as was noted above in regard to an image of the Battle of Sodom and Gomorrah, in which text and image interact not only physically but somewhat violently. (See Chapter 5, Fig. 10) The ark's three tiers form a most literal frame, and yet if we trace it to either edge, its otherwise sharp, linear forms are bent upward, merging with the multicolored planks of the hull of the ark which also constitute the neck and tail of the dragon. The wood planks of the hull are multi-colored, as are those on the boat of the Bayeux Tapestry. (See Fig. 2) However, the frame around the human and animal figures is yellow, matching neither the orange nor the plain vellum of the hull. Instead, this is the color of the dragon's head and tail, emphasizing that the sheltering structure of the ark is, in fact, part of the body of this animate beast.

In essence, Noah and his family, the progenitors of all humanity, are shown in the belly of a monster. They are placed in a position somewhat analogous to Jonah, though he spent a mere three days in the belly of a great fish, whereas Noah and his kin dwelled inside this creature for almost a year while, according to the narrative, God destroyed the rest of the human race.¹² In several instances, we saw the assimilation of the human body as a part of the body of the monster, particularly in the *Marvels of the East*. The human body has also served as food for many of these creatures. But here, the body of the monster acts as a shelter, as a refuge, recalling the *fenfreoðo* where Grendel and his mother dwelled, as well as the slime-filled fen of Guthlac.¹³ They may appear frightful, but to their inhabitants, they are the ideal shelter.

The Anglo-Saxons were encouraged to connect their island to the sons of Noah by at least one early author. As cited in Chapter One, the 'Nennius' compiler provides an account for the postdiluvian occupation of Britain by "the detested Brutus," who traces his lineage through Jupiter to Ham, who mocked his father's nakedness and was therefore cursed.¹⁴ This is, perhaps, not the ideal origin, not the most auspicious beginnings for a nation. But it must be recalled that these accursed sons of Ham are not the Anglo-Saxons, but rather, the Britons. The Anglo-Saxons arrived much later, and they did so, most famously, by boat.¹⁵ When thinking of the arrival of their founding father Hengest, the Anglo-Saxons might have pictured just such a "sea-horse."

As depicted in this image, the family of Noah is not merely contained within the ark. They are fully subsumed within the monstrous body, itself. This body, like so many others in the Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman worlds, is a hybrid being—part dragon, part fish, and now part wooden plank. This composite being has the capacity to absorb and incorporate all

forms of life within its great body which is—like the walls of Jerusalem and Eden on the Hereford map but also like the wall of Gog and Magog on the Psalter map—locked and barred by a high, round-headed door, here fortified with iron fittings. (See Chapter 2, Fig. 1 and 4) Perhaps this door is intended, like the door in the wall of Eden, to keep all dangers out of this replication of the peaceable kingdom. On the other hand, perhaps it is intended to function like the wall of Gog and Magog, to keep the dangerous hoards within. In fact, the ‘Nennius’ compiler also linked the British progenitor Brutus to Javan, son of Japheth, brother of the same Magog.¹⁶

Again, like so many other monsters we have seen, this great monster-ark overflows its boundaries in more literal ways. It bursts out of the frame on either side, with head and tail spilling into the margins, into the “infected zones” of the world and of the manuscript page, “where all kinds of monstrosities are possible.”¹⁷ The ark seems to be in dry-dock, despite the narrative of the flood. We cannot attribute this to an inability on the part of the illuminator, considering the delicate, fish-filled waters painted in the Creation cycle at the beginning of the manuscript.¹⁸ Rather, the clarity of the image allows for complete inspection of this marvelous ark. It is, like the dragon-headed ships of the Bayeux Tapestry, fully available for our inspection. (See Fig. 2) The ark is exposed even to the point of being cut open in cross-section to reveal the inner contents. This flaying of the monster is necessary in order that we be able to see the incorporation of the human body within its monstrous form.

For the Anglo-Saxons, dwelling in the world’s margins, monsters were seen as fearsome and real adversaries as well as symbols of evil, yet as this image and others discussed above suggest, it was also possible to see monsters as a means to salvation.¹⁹ When all the world was awash in sin and only a select few would be chosen to survive, Noah and his family sought refuge in the belly of the beast, in a monster great enough to survive the flood. It is worth noting that this is a monster constructed by man on the preceding folio. The vast majority of the monsters in the many manuscripts discussed here were considered to be the creations of God.²⁰ For the Anglo-Saxon illuminator of the *Hexateuch*, however, in order to survive the Great Flood, Noah must labor to build himself a monster, inside of which he and his family may hide during this dangerous time.

On a broader scale, the medieval English were continually constructing monsters against which they might wage imagined struggles, behind which they might hide and through which they might define their very identity. Somewhere between God and the devil, angel and animal, the English struggled to maintain their distance from the natural world, but also from the

supernatural and even unnatural world of strange, half-glimpsed beings they envisioned around themselves. The more outlandish the monster, the firmer the division might become; the more human the monster, the more unsettling the image.

Burial boats such as the pair found in Mounds One and Two at Sutton Hoo served to convey the deceased on their journey to the world of the dead. The ship from Mound One, Martin Carver argues, “would surely have been decorated . . . with an ornamented headpiece at the stem and a tailpiece at the stern . . . There is no reason to doubt that the Anglo-Saxons could execute in wood what they were able to realise in metal and manuscripts.”²¹

The burial ships served to guide deceased kings through a transition into their next life. Just so, Noah’s great dragon-ark served to shelter his family through the greatest danger weathered by humanity, according to the biblical narrative—the flood that reduced the human race to a mere eight shipwrecked survivors. For this illuminator, the only appropriate image for the ark was one that incorporated a measure of monstrosity. For the Anglo-Saxons—a marginal, hybrid society—and the medieval English cultures that followed them, maps and monsters were able to fill the most vital of roles. Together, they declared their creators to be peripheral yet normal people, and therefore worthy of salvation despite their damnable location.

Notes

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

1. London, British Library, Royal 6. B. VIII, f. 1v. See Elzbieta Temple, *A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles: Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts 900–1066* (London: Harvey Miller, 1976), 72–73, no. 54, who dates this manuscript to tenth to eleventh century, possibly from St. Augustine's, Canterbury.
2. Richard Gameson, *The Role of Art in the Late Anglo-Saxon Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 61.
3. Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture*, Third Edition, trans. Catharine Misrahi (New York: Fordham University Press, 1996), 73.
4. Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. by Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969, iv:24, 418). (This translation and all others in this volume, unless specifically cited, are my own.) For the Old English paraphrase, which gives a similar account and also includes a transcription of the Hymn, see Bede, *The Old English Version of Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. Thomas Miller (London: Trübner, 1891), 346.
5. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 27. This manuscript has been dated to the second quarter of the tenth century, and attributed to Winchester by Temple, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, 38–39, no. 7.
6. Defensor, *Liber Scintillarum*, ed. E. W. Rhodes (London: Trübner, 1889), 221.
7. Translation based on my transcription from Oxford, Corpus Christi MS 197, f. 103v-104r, available in digital facsimile from Matthew Dovey, Katherine Ferguson and Emma Leeson, "Corpus Christi College MS. 197," *Early Manuscripts at Oxford University*, September 2000, <<http://image.ox.ac.uk/>> (accessed April 5, 2003).
8. Oxford, Corpus Christi MS 197, f. 104r-104v.

9. Oxford, Corpus Christi MS 197, f. 71r-71v and 82r-82v.
10. Cohen, *Of Giants*, 45.
11. Temple, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, 72, no. 52. Temple places this manuscript in the late tenth century.
12. Richard Gameson, *The Role of Art in the Late Anglo-Saxon Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 264. For Richard Gameson, "art taught Man how to conceive the mysteries of Christianity and explained what God was like. It also supplied tangible spirituality on earth, providing both the means to perform liturgical ceremonies and devotional acts, and *foci* at which to direct them."
13. Gillian Overing and Clara Lees, "Before History, Before Difference: Bodies, Metaphor, and the Church in Anglo-Saxon England," *Yale Journal of Criticism*, 11:2 (1998), 316. (Original emphasis.)
14. Michael Camille, *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 10.
15. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen works to obliquely define monstrosity in his "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).
16. C.R. Dodwell, "Art Survivals and Written Sources," in *Anglo-Saxon Art: A New Perspective* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 1-23.
17. Dodwell, 1.
18. Dodwell, 234.
19. George Henderson, "The Idiosyncrasy of Late Anglo-Saxon Religious Imagery," *England in the Eleventh Century: Proceedings of the 1990 Harlaxton Symposium* (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1992), 239.
20. Andrew Reynolds, *Anglo-Saxon England: Life and Landscape* (Stroud: Tempus Publishing, 1999), 23. Andrew Reynolds notes that archeology does not support a notion of cultural change at 1066, but rather shows a gradual change still underway in 1200. Francis Wormald's stylistic and linguistic analysis of manuscripts confirms this. (Francis Wormald, "Anglo-Saxon Painting," *Collected Writings I* (London: Oxford University Press, 1984), 121 and Wormald, "The Survival of Anglo-Saxon Illumination after the Norman Conquest," *Collected Writings I* (London: Oxford University Press, 1984), 153.) In 1945, he refuted the tendency "to regard the Norman Conquest as constituting a complete break with the past accompanied by the introduction of a new style of illumination." (Francis Wormald, "Decorated Initials in English MSS from A.D. 900 to 1100," *Archaeologia*, 91 (1945), 107.) Indeed, he notes, even the Anglo-Saxon language, which we might expect to be the first casualty of the Conquest, remains in active literary usage. Wormald, "The Survival of Anglo-Saxon Illumination," 153.) This continuity was not merely an artistic and linguistic phenomenon. In his excellent and detailed study of the English Church, Henry Loyn found that the replacement of Anglo-Saxon bishops with Normans through the end of

the 1080s resulted in “no great break to be noted.” (Henry Loyn, *The English Church, 940–1154* (New York: Longman, 2000), 86.) Politically, the same is to be found. With regard to the state of affairs in the twelfth century, Eric John writes “it is certain, then, that crucial elements in English local and central government not only began, but were well-developed before 1066 . . . It was government in the Old English style, not *à la Française*, which was the basis of the power of kings of England after the Conquest.” (Campbell, et al., 238.) John continues: “In any case what cannot be doubted is that, long before 1066, the problems of government at a distance were well on the road to solution, through the network of shires and the body of local officials responsible to the crown.” (238.)

21. Gildas, *The Ruin of Britain and Other Works*, ed. Michael Winterbottom (London: Phillimore, 1978).

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

1. Hugh MacDougall, *Racial Myth in English History: Trojans, Teutons, and Anglo-Saxons* (London: University Press of New England, 1982), 1.
2. Michael Winterbottom, “Introduction,” in Gildas, *The Ruin of Britain and Other Works*. (London: Phillimore, 1978), 1.
3. Gildas, 97.
4. Gildas, 97.
5. Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), I:15, 50.
6. Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, I:15, 50.
7. Nennius, *British History and the Welsh Annals*, ed. John Morris (London: Phillimore, 1980), 77. For issues surrounding the authorship of this work, see David Dumville, “The Historical Value of the *Historia Brittonum*,” *Arthurian Literature*, 6 (1986), 2–5.
8. See, for example, Nennius, 77–78.
9. Charles Plummer and John Earle, *Two of the Saxon Chronicles, Parallel with Supplementary Extracts from the Others* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), 13: “And in their days, Vortigern invited the Angles hither. And they came in three ships hither to Britain, to that place Heorwines Fleot. This king Vortigern gave them land on the southeast of this land, so that they would fight with the Picts. They then fought with the Picts, and were victorious wherever they went. They then sent to Angeln, saying to send more forces, and they told them about the worthless Bretwalda [High King of Britain] and the excellent land. They then immediately sent hither more troops to support the others. Then came the men of three German races, of the Old Saxons, of the Angles, of the Jutes . . . From Angle, which thereafter stood a wasteland between the Jutes and the Saxons, came the East Angles, the Middle Angles, the Mercians, and all the Northumbrians. Their chieftains were two broth-

ers, Hengest and Horsa. These were Wihtgils's sons. Wihtgils was the son of Witta, Witta of Wecta, Wecta of Woden. From that Woden arose all our royal family, and the Southumbrians also."

10. Nennius, 60.
11. Nennius, 63.
12. Revelation 20:8. References to the Vulgate are to the edition of Robert Weber and Bonifatius Fischer, eds, *Biblia Sacra: Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994).
13. Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The Historia Regnum Britannie of Geoffry of Monmouth*, ed. Neil Wright (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1984), 13. Also see Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters, and the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 29 and Scott Westrem, "Against Gog and Magog," *Text and Territory: Geographical Imagination in the European Middle Ages*, ed. Sylvia Tomasch and Sealy Gilles, (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 1998), 55–56.
14. *Maxims II*, lines 43b–44a, in Hrafnhildur Bodvarsdottir, "The Function of the Beasts of Battle in Old English Poetry" (Ph.D. diss., SUNY Stonybrook, 1976), 42. The *Maxims II* are in London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius B. I, dated by the British Library's catalogue to the eleventh century.
15. Gerald of Wales, *Topographia Hibernica*, in *Opera*, V, ed. James Dimstock (London: Longmans, Green, Reader and Dyer, 1867), 141–142.
16. Nennius, 67.
17. Nennius, 69.
18. Plummer and Earle, 13, Thorpe, 21.
19. Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, 50.
20. Reynolds, 37.
21. For discussion, see Barbara Yorke, *The Anglo-Saxons* (Stroud: Sutton, 1999), 4–5 and Hanning, 54–55.
22. Gildas, 94–95.
23. Hanning, 102.
24. Frederic Farrar, "Aptitudes of Races," *Transactions of the Ethnological Society*, 5 (1867), (reprinted in Michael Biddiss, *Images of Race* (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, Inc., 1979), 145.
25. Farrar, 145.
26. John Friedman, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 198–9.
27. Cohen, *Of Giants* 6.
28. Bodvarsdottir, 42.
29. Roger Bacon, *The Opus Majus*, I, ed. John Henry Bridges (Frankfurt: Minerva, 1964), 139.
30. Gildas, 89–90.

31. Orosius, *Le Storie Contro I Pagani*, ed. Adolf Lippold (Milan: A. Mondadori, 2001), 34, Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, 14, Nennius, 59, Thorpe, 3, Geoffrey of Monmouth, 2, Gerald, *Topographia Hibernica*, 23.
32. Orosius, 34.
33. Isidore, *Etymologiarum Sive Originum Libri XX*, vol. 2, ed. W. M. Lindsay (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 14.6.2.
34. Isidore, *Etymologiarum*, vol. 1, 9.2.102.
35. Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, I:1, 16.
36. Christopher De Hamel, *A History of Illuminated Manuscripts* (Boston: David R. Godine, 1986), 19, trans. De Hamel.
37. Evelyn Edson, *Mapping Time and Space: How Medieval Mapmakers Viewed Their World* (London: British Library, 1997), 119, notes that John of Wallingford was a pupil of the great cartographer and chronicler, Matthew Paris.
38. Edson, 119–121.
39. Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, III:25, 300.
40. Cumman, *Cumman's Letter, De Controversia Paschali*, ed. Maura Walsh and Dáidhí O Cróinín (Toronto: The Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1988), 75.
41. Edson, 6.
42. Edson, 6.
43. Edson, 5.
44. P. D. A Harvey, *Mappa Mundi: The Hereford World Map* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 54. (Harvey's translation.)
45. Gerald of Wales, *Descriptio Kambriæ*, in *Opera*, VI, ed. James Dimock (London: Longmans, Green, Reader and Dyer, 1868), 156.
46. For a discussion of the monsters of Gerald's *Topographia Hibernica* see my article, "The Other Close at Hand: Gerald of Wales and 'the Marvels of the West,'" *The Monstrous Middle Ages*, ed. Bettina Bildhauer and Robert Mills (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), 97–112.
47. C.R. Dodwell, *Anglo-Saxon Art: A New Perspective* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 27.
48. Michael Gaudio, "Matthew Paris and the Cartography of the Margins," *Gesta*, 39:1 (2000), 50.
49. Dorothy Whitelock, *The Audience of Beowulf* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), p. 70.
50. Clare Stancliffe, "Red, White and Blue Martyrdom," *Ireland in Early Medieval Europe: Studies in Memory of Kathleen Hughes*, ed. Dorothy Whitelock, Rosamond McKitterick and David Dumville, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 28.
51. Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, III: 23, 286.
52. James Campbell, Eric John and Patrick Wormald, *The Anglo-Saxons* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 82. James Tschen-Emmons, "The Limits of

Late Antiquity: The Life of Áed ma Bricc and the Irish Literati in Late Antiquity,” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 2002), 6, makes a similar argument for the Irish Saint Áed, who also began life as a warrior and then settled in “the Swamp of Midbre.” He continues, “it appears that Áed chose a suitable ‘desert’ in which to continue his spiritual life.”

53. John, 46.
54. *The Life of Saint Guthlac*, ed. Jane Roberts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 88.
55. William Ian Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 38.
56. Charles Wycliffe Goodwin, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Version of the Life of Saint Guthlac, Hermit of Crowland* (London: John Russell Smith, 1848), 21–22.
57. Miller, 40.
58. Goodwin, 34–36.
59. While the Swamp Thing has been brought to life in several incarnations, I will refer to Alan Moore, Steve Bissette and John Totleben, *The Sage of the Swamp Thing*, I, (Canada: DC Comics, 1987).
60. *Felix’s Life of Saint Guthlac*, ed. Bertram Colgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), 120.
61. Friedrich Klaeber, *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Heath, 1950), lines 809–823.
62. *Beowulf*, lines 1361–1372.
63. Seamus Heaney, *Beowulf: A New Verse Translation* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000), 105. (*Beowulf*, line 1518.)
64. These are from J.R. Clark Hall, *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 161, Joseph Bosworth and T. Northcote Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary, Based on the Manuscript Collections of the Late Joseph Bosworth* (Oxford: The Clarendon press, 1882), 492, and George Jack, ed., *Beowulf: A Student Edition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 116.
65. Hall, 161, Bosworth and Toller, 492.
66. *Beowulf*, line 1367.
67. Cohen, *Of Giants*, 120–123, esp. n. 8.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

1. Gaudio, 52.
2. Gaudio, 57.
3. G. R. Crone, “New Light on the Hereford Map,” *The Geographical Journal*, 131:4 (1965), 447.
4. Natalia Lozovsky, *“The Earth is Our Book”: Geographical Knowledge in the Latin West ca. 400–1000* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 1.
5. Edson, vii. The embedded quotation is from Matthew Edney, “Theory and the History of Cartography,” *Imago Mundi*, 48 (1996), 187.

6. Edson, vii.
7. Denis Wood, *The Power of Maps* (London: Guilford Press, 1992), 26.
8. Jorge Luis Borges, *Collected Fictions*, trans. Andrew Hurley (New York: Viking, 1998), 325.
9. Wood, 122.
10. Jeremy Black, *Maps and Politics* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997), 21.
11. Harvey, "Medieval Maps," 298.
12. Wood, 21.
13. John Friedman, 38.
14. Wood, 38.
15. Harvey, "Medieval Maps," xvi.
16. Harvey, "Medieval Maps," xviii.
17. Naomi Reed Kline, *Maps of Medieval Thought: The Hereford Paradigm* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2001), 10.
18. W. R. Tobler, "Medieval Distortions: The Projections of Ancient Maps," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 56 (1966), 355.
19. Black, 29.
20. Mark Monmonier, *How to Lie with Maps* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 1.
21. Monmonier, 9.
22. Black, 31.
23. Harvey, "Medieval Maps," 322, supports Tobler's assertion that this could be the result of a carefully chosen map projection which places unequal emphasis on the central portions of the map, converse to the Mercator Projection, which minimizes the equatorial regions and amplifies as it moves toward the poles.
24. Klein, 3.
25. P. D. A. Harvey, *Medieval Maps* (London: The British Library, 1991), 25.
26. Delano-Smith and Kain, 37.
27. Harvey, "Medieval Maps," 296–299; and Edson, 7.
28. For a fairly complete list of all known *mappaemundi*, see Harvey, "Medieval Maps," Appendix 18.2 (359–368).
29. Harvey, "Medieval Maps," 284.
30. Delano-Smith and Kain, 2.
31. Edson, 14.
32. In her discussion of the presence of the earthy paradise on medieval English maps, as we can see at the upper-left edge of the *Hereford Mappaemundi*, Edson, 15, notes "since it was believed that man would never re-enter the earthly paradise, this map was plainly not designed for travel, but for contemplation." See also Gaudio, 52.
33. John Friedman, 85.
34. Augustine, *Epistulae*, ed. A. Goldbacher, *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, XXXIV:2 (Vienna: F. Tempsky, 1898), 107.

35. Harvey, "Medieval Maps," 312. Richard of Haldingham has been associated with Richard de Bello, prebend of Sleaford (Lafford) in 1277, and also prebend of Norton (in Hereford) in 1305, d. 1326. They are possibly two distinct historical figures, but Harvey believes it more probable that they are the same. Harvey provides a thorough discussion of the dating of the map, and its connection with Richard of Battle, or of Haldingham. See *Mappa Mundi*, 7–11. In a rare display of authorial presence, Richard inscribes: "Let all who have this history—or shall hear, or read, or see it—pray to Jesus in his divinity to have pity on Richard of Holdingham, or of Sleaford, who made it and laid it out, that joy in heaven may be granted to him." (trans. Scott Westrem, *The Hereford Map* (Turnhout, Belgium, 2001), 11.) Like the texts cited, the map relies heavily on classical texts. It is "the culmination of the Orosian type" of map, and acknowledges its source. The map is labeled "Orosius's description of the *ornesta* of the world, as displayed within." According to Harvey, "Medieval Maps," 309, Richard also relies on Bible, Pliny, Augustine, Jerome, Strabo and the Antonine itinerary.
36. Scott Westrem, *The Hereford Map: A Transcription and Translation of the Legends with Commentary* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001).
37. Philip Alexander, "Jerusalem as the Omphalos of the World: On the History of a Geographical Concept," *Jerusalem: Its Sanctity and Centrality to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, ed. Lee Levine. (New York: Continuum, 1999), 112.
38. P.D.A. Harvey, "The Sawley Map and Other World Maps in Twelfth-Century England," *Imago Mundi*, 49 (1997), 38.
39. Harvey, *Mappa Mundi*, 1.
40. Richard Gameson, *The Role of Art in the Late Anglo-Saxon Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 264.
41. Daniel Dorling and David Fairbairn, *Mapping: Ways of Representing the World* (Essex: Longman, 1997), 76.
42. In order that this high benchmark repository for geo-political knowledge be available to all, the entire *National Atlas of the United States* has been digitized. See United States Department of the Interior Geological Survey, *The 1970 National Atlas of the United States of America*, print version 1970, online version October 2000, <<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gmdhtml/census3.html>> (accessed June 2005).
43. Kathy Lavezzo, *Angels on the Edge of the World: The Geography of English Identity from Ælfric to Chaucer* (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 1999), 9.
44. William Latham Bevan and H. W. Phillott, *Medieval Geography. An Essay in Illustration of the Hereford Mappa Mundi* (London: E. Stanford, 1873), v.
45. Jerome, *Commentariorum in Ezechielem* in the *Patrologia Latina*, 25:52. Iain MacLeod Higgins provides a thorough discussion of this belief in his "Defining the Earth's Center in a Medieval 'Multi-Text': Jerusalem in the

- Book of John Mandeville," *Text and Territory: Geographical Imagination in the European Middle Ages*, ed. Sylvia Tomasch and Sealy Gilles (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 1998), 34.
46. Jerome, *Commentariorum in Ezechielem* in the *Patrologia Latina* 25, 52.
 47. Higgins, 35.
 48. Higgins, 35–37.
 49. R. B. C. Huygens, ed, *Peregrinationes Tres: Seawulf, John of Würzburg and Theodericus* (Turnholt: Brepols, 1994), 66.
 50. London, British Library, Royal I. E.vii. Elzbieta Temple, *A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles: Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts 900–1066* (London: Harvey Miller, 1976), 119, no. 102, dates this work to 1050–70. Elizabeth Marer-Banasik, "The Creator with the Cosmos and a Compass: The Frontispieces of the Thirteenth-Century Moralizing Bibles," *Rutgers Art Review*, 15 (1995), 26 notes that "the concept of God with the cosmos and a compass" was "first formulated in the Anglo-Saxon period."
 51. Harvey, *Mappa Mundi*, notes the presence of the pin-hole on his title-page flyleaf.
 52. Chana Safrai, "The Centrality of Jerusalem: A Retrospect," *The Centrality of Jerusalem: Historical Perspectives*, ed. M. Poorthuis and Ch. Safrai (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1996), 226.
 53. Higgins, 51.
 54. See also Philip Alexander, "Jerusalem as the Omphalos of the World: On the History of a Geographical Concept," *Jerusalem: Its Sanctity and Centrality to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, ed. Lee Levine (New York: Continuum, 1999).
 55. Higgins, 31.
 56. Delano-Smith and Kain, 40. See also Tom O'Loughlin, "The View from Iona: Adomnán's mental maps," *Peritia: Journal of the Medieval Academy of Ireland*, 10 (1996), 98–122, 100.
 57. Trans. Higgins, 44.
 58. Mary Campbell, *The Witness and the Other World: Exotic European Travel Writing, 400–1600* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1988), 65.
 59. Lavezzo, 11.
 60. Harvey, "Medieval Maps," 296–299.
 61. Klein, 44.
 62. Harvey, *Mappa Mundi*, 4.
 63. Nathaniel Gates, *Racial Classification and History* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1997), ix.
 64. Michael Camille, *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 16. Camille is here relying on the work of Brønislav Geremek.
 65. Veronica Sekules, *Medieval Art*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 12.
 66. Wood, 139.

67. Black, 103.
68. Higgins, 51.
69. Higgins, 43.
70. Geoffrey of Monmouth, 90–91.
71. Giles is rather certain about this connection: “This is the venerable monument of antiquity, now called Stonehenge, of the origin of which we know no more than we know of the solid framework of the globe, itself. It was certainly erected by a people who lived long before the beginning of authentic history.” (un-numbered note, p. 218.)
72. Gerald of Wales, *Topographia Hibernica*, 100.
73. The ‘work of giants’ (*enta geweorc*) will be discussed at length in Part 2.
74. Michael Camille, “Glossing the Flesh: Scopophilia and the Margins of the Medieval Book,” *The Margins of the Text* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 255.

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

1. Klein, 146.
2. Michael Uebel, “Unthinking the Monster: Twelfth-Century Responses to Saracen Alterity,” *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 267.
3. Westrem, *Hereford Map*, 379.
4. Westrem, *Hereford Map*, 133.
5. Klein, 94–97, 142–145.
6. Klein, 95.
7. Klein, 95.
8. Susan Kim, “Man-Eating Monsters and Ants as Big as Dogs,” *Mediaevalia Groningana*, XX (1997), 49–50.
9. Kenneth Hylson-Smith, *Christianity in England from Roman Times to the Reformation, I. From Roman Times to 1066* (London: SCM Press, 1999), 172–173.
10. Camille, *Image on the Edge*, 48.
11. London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius B.v., f. 80r.
12. Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram libri duodecim*, ed. J. Zycha, 28:1 of *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* (Vienna, F. Tempsky, 1894), 229 and Bede, *Hexaameron, sive libri quatuor in principium genesis, usque ad nativitatem isaac et electionem ismaelis* in the *Patrologia Latina*, 91:43D.
13. Isidore, *Etymologiarum libri XX*, in the *Patrologia Latina*, 82:496C.
14. Bernard Bischoff and Michael Lapidge, eds. *Biblical Commentaries from the Canterbury School of Theodore and Hadrian* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1994), 388.
15. The so-called Henry of Mainz map from Sawley Abbey, ca. 1200, is in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College Library, MS 66, p. 2.

16. Julia Kristeva, *Power of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 11.
17. Cosmas Indicopleustes, *Christian Topography*, ed. and trans. J. W. McCrindle (London: Bedford Press, 1897), 42. Indicopleustes wrote in the sixth century.
18. Trans. McCrindle, 43.
19. Lavezzo, 15.
20. Debra Higgs Strickland, "Monsters and Christian Enemies," *History Today*, 50 (2000), 50.
21. Harvey, "Medieval Maps," 330.
22. Monmonier, 35.
23. Wood, 71–72.
24. Gaudio, 50.
25. The absence of temples is, perhaps, particularly significant, since this map was probably made close to 1290, when the Jews were expelled from England. However, Westrem, *Hereford Map*, 122, points out that Jews are depicted on the map, worshipping an idol labeled "Mahun."
26. Sekules, 17.
27. Monmonier, 122.
28. John Friedman, 153.
29. Strickland, 50.
30. Tomasch, 2.
31. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Preface: In a Time of Monsters," *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), viii. Nomination as a means of control will be discussed at length in Part 2.
32. Herbert H. Odom, "Generalizations of Race in Nineteenth-Century Physical Anthropology," *Isis*, 57 (1967), 9.
33. Biddiss, 16.
34. Charles Mackay, "The Negro and the Negrophilists," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 99 (1866) (reprinted in Biddiss), 94.
35. Dorling and Fairbairn, 65.
36. Westrem, *Hereford Map*, 5. This inscription is written on a scroll held by Christ at the very top of the map.
37. Diane L. Prosser MacDonald, *Transgressive Corporeality: The Body, Poststructuralism, and the Theological Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York, 1995), xi.
38. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 11.
39. Westrem, *Hereford Map*, 115.
40. At the 20th International Conference on the History of Cartography, Portland, Maine, 2003, I delivered a paper on this topic ("Mapping the Outer Edges of the World: The Marvels of the East and 'the Farthest Islands of the West,'"), after which P. D. A. Harvey suggested that these feet might recall the Tetramorph, with the lion's paw, the ox's hoof, the man's foot and the

eagle's talon. This possibility is seductive, although comparisons with contemporary images suggest that this bird's foot is a webbed duck's foot, rather than an eagle's talon.

41. Kristeva, 4.
42. Uebel, 266.
43. Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture*, trans. Catharine Misrahi (New York: Fordham University Press, 1996), 73.
44. For a lively discussion of the questions and controversies surrounding human cloning, see Lori B. Andrews, *The Clone Age: Adventures in the New World of Reproductive Technology* (New York: Henry Holt, 1999).
45. Mary Campbell, 68; Westrem, "Gog and Magog," 62; and Klein, 184–185.
46. Westrem, *Hereford Map*, 47.
47. Westrem, *Hereford Map*, 69.
48. Westrem, *Hereford Map*, 137.
49. See above, Chapter 1, p. 24.
50. Cohen, "Monster Culture," 6. For Cohen, this is because they defy categorization.
51. Cohen, "Monster Culture," 7.
52. *Vulgate*, Revelation 20:7.
53. *Vulgate*, Ezekiel 38:15.
54. Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, I: 1, 16.
55. Eviatar Zerubavel, *The Thin Line: Making Distinctions in Everyday Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 51.
56. Bede, "Letter to Egbert," in *The Complete Works*, ed. J. A. Giles, I, (London: Whittaker and Co., 1843), 132.
57. Bede, "Letter to Egbert," 126.
58. Bede, "Letter to Egbert," 124.
59. Among other less significant raids, the Vikings sacked the monastery at Lindisfarne in 793, causing Alcuin "to urge his countrymen to reform and to a renewal of Christian morals." See Catherine Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils c. 650–850* (New York: Leicester University Press, 1995), 167.
60. Wood, 108.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

1. Caroline Bynum, "Why All the Fuss about the Body? A Medievalist's Perspective," *Critical Inquiry*, 22 (1995), 31.
2. London, British Library, Royal 15. B. xix. This manuscript also contains a selection of texts by Bede. For a transcription and translation of this text, see Andy Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the Beowulf-Manuscript* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1995).
3. Orchard, 254.

4. Orchard, 256.
5. Orchard, 258.
6. See the introductions to the following for false travel claims: Gerald of Wales, *The History and Topography of Ireland*, trans. John O'Meara (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1982) and Tamarah Kohanski, *The Book of John Mandeville: An Edition of the Pynson Text with Commentary on the Defective Version* (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2001).
7. London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius B.iv, f. 12v. The Hexateuch is reproduced in a black-and-white facsimile. See C. R. Dodwell and Peter Clemoes, *The Old English Illustrated Hexateuch* (London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius B.iv.) (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1974). This passage is Genesis 6:4: "There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown." As pointed out by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters, and the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 190, n. 31, this text is based on the Vulgate: "Gigantes erant super terram in diebus illis." A collection of essays has recently been published, focusing on the Hexateuch. See Rebecca Barnhouse and Benjamin Withers, eds., *The Old English Hexateuch: Aspects and Approaches* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000).
8. London, British Library, Cotton Claudius B.iv. This manuscript is unique in its prodigious number of illustrations—approximately 394 images on 156 folios. Although the manuscript also contains Latin and Anglo-Saxon glosses in a twelfth-century hand, the Hexateuch was probably produced in the eleventh century, in or near St. Augustine's, Canterbury. There are five other manuscripts containing the full text of the Hexateuch, but none of them is illustrated. For a more complete discussion of giants in the *Hexateuch*, see Asa Simon Mittman, "There from the Beginning: Giants in the Old English *Hexateuch*," *Transmission of the Bible in Word, Image, and Song*, ed. Mildred Budny and Paul G. Remley (Tempe: Research Group on Manuscript Evidence in association with the Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2006).
9. For a selection of Old Testament giants, see the following: Genesis 6:4, Numbers 13:33, Deuteronomy 2:11, 2:20, 3:11, 3:13, Joshua 12:4, 13:12, 15:8, 17:17, 18:16, 2 Samuel 21:16, 21:18, 21:20, 21:22, 1 Chronicles 20:4, 20:6, 20:8.
10. Charles Mackay, "The Negro and the Negrophilists," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 99 (1866), (reprinted in Michael Biddiss, *Images of Race* (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1979), 92.
11. Cohen, 5. For references to the "work of giants" in *The Wanderer* and *The Ruin*, both from Exeter Book, see 8–9. The phrase appears in *Beowulf* three times: Lines 1681, 2718 and 2775.

12. Richard Hammer, *A Choice of Anglo-Saxon Verse* (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1970), 26.
13. Cohen, 18.
14. Without the active scriptoria of the Middle Ages, we would have few Classical texts remaining, and the communities of monks who copied and preserved such works often read them as well. See M. L. W. Laistner, "Bede as a Classical and a Patristic Scholar," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Fourth Series, 16 (1933).
15. Cohen, 19.
16. Friedrich Klaeber, *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Heath, 1950), lines 112–113.
17. Cohen, 1.
18. Susan Kim, "Man-Eating Monsters and Ants as Big as Dogs," *Mediaevalia Groningana*, XX, *Animals and the Symbolic in Medieval Art and Literature* (Gronigen: Egbert Forsten, 1997), 43.
19. Jonathan Sumption, *Pilgrimage: An Idea of Medieval Religion* (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), 65.
20. Mary Campbell, *The Witness and the Other World: Exotic European Travel Writing, 400–1600* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1988), 80. See also 57 and 72–73.
21. Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, V (London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1965), 42.
22. Ian Finlay, *Columba* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1979), 128.
23. Cohen, xiv. See also Mary Campbell, 74–5.
24. R. I. Page, *An Introduction to English Runes* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1999), 101.
25. Ralph Elliott, *Runes: An Introduction* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 93.
26. Gale Owen-Crocker, *Rites and Religions of the Anglo-Saxons* (London: David and Charles, 1981), 59.
27. Page, 15, 114.
28. Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 41, 326. This manuscript is paginated, not foliated. This pagination is retained in Mildred Budny, *Insular, Anglo-Saxon, and Early Anglo-Norman Manuscript Art at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge: And Illustrated Catalogue* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1997), 501–524, no. 32, and I will follow suit.
29. Karen Jolly, *Popular Religion in Late Saxon England: Elf Charms in Context* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 160–61.
30. Orchard, 258, 260.
31. Orchard, 258, 260.
32. The earliest known source for this set of monstrous races is Herodotus in the fifth century BCE. According to Mary Campbell, 63, and Friedman, "Marvels," 320, the English version descends from a version framed as a let-

ter from Farasmanes to Emperor Hadrian, very loosely dated to some time between the second and sixth centuries.

33. For the seminal article dealing with the *Marvels of the East*, see Rudolf Wittkower, "Marvels of the East: A Study in the History of Monsters," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 5 (1942). See also John Friedman, "The Marvels-of-the-East Tradition in Anglo-Saxon Art," *Sources of Anglo-Saxon Culture*, XX, *Studies in Medieval Culture* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1986), 319, 338. Friedman provides an outline of the visual contents of these three manuscripts as follows: Vitellius has 29 illustrations, 15 of monstrous men. Tiberius has 38 illustrations, 18 of monstrous men. Bodley has 39 illustrations, 26 of monstrous men.
34. Elżbieta Temple, *A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles: Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts 900–1066* (London: Harvey Miller, 1976), 72, no. 52. Temple places this manuscript in the late tenth century. However, this date remains in contention, and the body of literature on the subject is vast. See, for example, Colin Chase, *The Dating of Beowulf* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), Kevin Kiernan, *Beowulf and the Beowulf Manuscript* (New Brunswick: Rutgers, 1981), and Audrey Meaney, "Scyld Scefing and the Dating of the Beowulf—Again," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 7 (1989), 7–40. Michael Lapidge has kept the debate alive by recently challenging Kiernan's assertions in his "The Archetypic of Beowulf," *Anglo-Saxon England*, 29 (2000), 5–41.
35. James Campbell, Eric John and Patrick Wormald, *The Anglo-Saxons* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 193.
36. Campbell, John and Wormald, 193.
37. Eric John, *Reassessing Anglo-Saxon England* (Manchester University Press: New York, 1996), 159. See also Campbell and Wormald, 214. Temple, 104, no. 87, places this manuscript in the second quarter of the eleventh century, at Winchester.
38. John Friedman, "The Marvels-of-the-East Tradition," 320. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 614 has been dated by C. M. Kauffmann, *A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles: Romanesque Manuscripts, 1066–1190* (London: Harvey Miller, 1975), 77, no. 38, to 1120–1140.
39. Richard Gameson, *The Role of Art in the Late Anglo-Saxon Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 11.
40. Laura Kendrick, *Animating the Letter: The Figurative Embodiment of Writing from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999), 69.
41. Hillel Schwartz, *The Culture of the Copy: Striking Likenesses, Unreasonable Facsimiles* (New York: Zone Books, 1996), 211.
42. Schwartz, 214.
43. The Old English Vitellius text is usually referred to as the *Wonders of the East* and the Latin versions as the *Marvels of the East*. As they were included

side-by-side in the bilingual Tiberius manuscript, it seems to be fit to refer to them by a single, collective title, and so I have chosen what appears to be more common in discussions of the images. This is most likely the result of an art historical focus on the two later manuscripts, and a general art historical avoidance of the Vitellius manuscript, a situation I intend to address in a future publication.

44. Andy Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Beowulf Manuscript* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1995), 190–192.
45. George Brown, “The Dynamics of Literacy in Anglo-Saxon England,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 77:1 (1995), 119–120.
46. McGurk, *et al.*, 88.
47. Brown, 125.
48. Brown, 122.
49. Bernhard Bischoff, *Latin Palaeography: Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, trans. Dáibhí Ó Cróinín and David Ganz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 112.
50. Bischoff, 90–91.
51. Paul Gibbs, *Wonders of the East: A Critical Edition and Commentary* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Duke University, 1977), 9.
52. John, 170.
53. H. R. Loyn, *Anglo-Saxon England and the Norman Conquest* (London: Longman, 1962), 329.
54. Orchard, 22.
55. Orchard, 22.
56. Orchard, 190–192.
57. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 614, f. 40r.
58. Orchard, 20 and Gibbs, 5–9.
59. Orchard, 20.
60. John Friedman, “Marvels,” 320, disagrees with the general trend, arguing instead that Tiberius is an “indirect copy” of Vitellius.
61. Carol Neuman de Vegvar, “A Feast to the Lord: Drinking Horns, the Church and the Liturgy,” *Objects, Images and the Word: Art in the Service of the Liturgy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 231–56.
62. Arthur Haddan and William Stubbs, eds., *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, 3 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1871), 452.
63. de Vegvar, 232. See, for example, *Beowulf*, lines 491–641.
64. de Vegvar, 232 and Julius Caesar, *Commentarii de Bello Gallico*, ed. F. Kramer and W. Dittenberger (Berlin: Weidmannsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1960, 198–199).
65. Bruce-Mitford, Rupert. *Arms, Armour and Regalia*, in *The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial*, II. London: British Museum Publications, 1983, 325.

66. See Chapter 1, note 21.
67. Camille, 33.
68. Mary Campbell, 57, 63.
69. Frederic Farrar, "Aptitudes of Races," *Transactions of the Ethnological Society*, 5 (1867), (reprinted in Biddiss, 141–155), 146.
70. For the passage on Pygmies from the *Liber Monstrorum*, see Orchard, 272.
71. Gerald of Wales, *Topographia Hibernica*, 171.
72. Farrar, 146.
73. Gerald of Wales, *Topographia Hibernica*, 171.
74. Raymond Dart, "The Predatory Transition from Ape to Man," *International Anthropological and Linguistic Review*, 1:4 (1953), 209.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE

1. Michael Gaudio, "Matthew Paris and the Cartography of the Margins," *Gesta*, 39:1 (2000), 50 and Piero Camporesi, *The Incorruptible Flesh: Bodily Mutilation and Mortification in Religion and Folklore*, trans. Tania Croft-Murray. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 79.
2. John Friedman, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 34.
3. Friedman, *Monstrous Races*, 37. Again, such notions were surprisingly long-lived. John William Jackson, "Race in Legislation and Political Economy," *Anthropological Review*, 4 (1866) (reprinted in Biddiss, 113–140), 122, argues that "the earth, at her different zones of latitude and longitude, or shall we say in other language, on her several areas, has specially characterized types, vegetable and animal, bestial and human. These specialties are obviously not accidental. They are transmissible and enduring, and far antedate all history . . . Nor are these distinctions simply physical and organic, they extend also to habits and capacities."
4. Tiberius, f. 80r.
5. Orchard, 188 and Tiberius, f. 80r.
6. Michael Camille, "Rethinking the Canon: Prophets, Canons, and Promising Monsters," *Art Bulletin*, 78:2 (1996), 200.
7. Jacques Derrida, *Points . . . : Interviews, 1974–1994*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 386.
8. Derrida, 386.
9. William Ian Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 164.
10. Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, ed. Brian Wallis (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984), 420. Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," *Video Culture: A Critical Investigation*, ed. John Hanhardt (Layton: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1986), 86, has also explored the

connection of nomination and control: "That fact of calling you by your name, the fact of knowing, even if I do not know what it is, that you 'have' a name of your own, which means that you are recognized as a unique subject . . . This recognition only gives us the 'consciousness' of our incessant (eternal) practice of ideological recognition."

11. *Hexateuch*, f. 6r.
12. See, for example, folios 29r, 36r and 37v.
13. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 7.
14. Biddiss, 16.
15. Scott Westrem, *The Hereford Map: A Transcription and Translation of the Legends with Commentary* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), 383.
16. Tiberius, f. 82.
17. Since medieval spelling for this term varies, I have adopted the modern anglicized version, "*blemmye(s)*" throughout.
18. Tiberius, f. 82.
19. Kristeva, 2.
20. Miller, x.
21. Miller, 111–112.
22. Charles Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, trans. Allen Tate (New York: New Directions, 1989), 38.
23. Miller, 21.
24. Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, "Body and Law in Late Anglo-Saxon England," *Anglo-Saxon England*, 27 (1998).
25. Gerald of Wales *Topographia Hibernica*, 181.
26. London, British Library, Royal 13. B.viii, f. 30v.
27. For the *Liber Monstrorum* account of the *antipodes*, see Orchard, 286–287.
28. Gerald of Wales, *Topographia Hibernica*, 182.
29. Cohen, 1.
30. Miller, 200.
31. R. Fowler, "A Late Old English Handbook for the Use of a Confessor," *Anglia*, 83 (1965), 17–18.
32. O'Keeffe, 228.
33. O'Keeffe, 214–215.
34. O'Keeffe, 229.
35. For a later manifestation of this notion, see Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 140. In his essay, "Inscriptions of the Law on the Body," Certeau writes, "it remains that the law constantly writes itself on bodies. It engraves itself on parchments made from the skins of its subjects. It articulates them in a juridical corpus. It makes its book out of them . . . The skin of the servant is the parchment on which the master's hand writes."

36. For particular punishments, see O’Keeffe, 215. O’Keeffe, 228, notes that the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* mentions the mutilation of an innocent man, thereby allowing for the imperfection of human justice.
37. Michael Goodich, ed., *Other Middle Ages: Witnesses at the Margins of Medieval Society* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 11.
38. Derrida, 386 and *The Thing From Another World*, aka *The Thing*, directed by Christian Nyby, 1951.
39. Friedman, 153.
40. On the *Mappamundi*, they are labeled *satirii*, *spinx*, *fauni*. The pluralization implies that these are not individuals, but colonies or countries of monsters, like those described in the *Marvels*.
41. P. D. A. Harvey, *Mappa Mundi: The Hereford World Map* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 5.
42. Miller, 4.
43. Gameson, 117. For more on this, see Herbert Broderick, “Some Attitudes Towards the Frame in Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts of the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries,” *Artibus et Historiae*, 5 (1982), 31–42.
44. Gameson, 152.
45. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 614, f. 38v.
46. Gameson, 142.
47. Friedman, 144.
48. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 614, f. 43r-44v and Tiberius 83v.
49. Tiberius, f. 82.
50. Susan Kim, “The Donestre and the Person of Both Sexes,” in *Naked Before God: The Unclothed Body in Anglo-Saxon England* (West Virginia University Press, 2003), 179.
51. Miller, 50.
52. Farrar, 146.
53. Alfred Wallace, “The Origin of Human Races and the Antiquity of Man, Deduced from the Theory of ‘Natural Selection,’” *Journal of the Anthropological Society*, 2 (1864) (reprinted in Biddiss, 37–54), 49.
54. Wallace, 49.
55. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 19.
56. Miller, 58.
57. Miller, 180.
58. Miller, 91, might connect this to the sense of disgust which can be conjured not only by looking at someone considered to be disgusting, but also by being looked at by the offending person.
59. Tiberius, f. 83r-83v, Orchard, 196.
60. Cohen, 2.
61. Kim, “The Donestre,” 179.
62. Bynum, 8.

63. Miller, 27.
64. Paul Rozin and April Fallon, "A Perspective on Disgust," *Psychological Review*, 94 (1987), 32.
65. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 614, f. 40v.
66. Camille, "Rethinking," 200.
67. Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, VII (London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1965), 56–58. Cohen, 187, n. 5, notes that Augustine is here following Cicero's *De divinatione* (I.xlii.93), and that Isidore is following Varo's *De lingua latina*.
68. Cohen, xiv. In his text, Cohen reverses the attributions of these quotations, but provides the correct citations in his footnote.
69. Scott Westrem, "Against Gog and Magog," *Text and Territory: Geographical Imagination in the European Middle Ages*, ed. Sylvia Tomasch and Sealy Gilles (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 1998), 55, is here discussing Gog and Magog, who make an early appearance on an Anglo-Saxon map of the tenth century.

NOTES TO CHAPTER SIX

1. Camille, "Rethinking," 200.
2. For Wittkower, 159, monsters are inherently "compound beings." Cohen, xv, argues for their inherent hybridity.
3. Michael Camille, "Simulacrum," *Critical Terms for Art History*, ed. Robert Nelson and Richard Shiff (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 42.
4. *Frankenstein*, produced by Carl Laemmle Jr. and directed by James Whale, 71 min (Universal, 1931).
5. Michael Camille, "Glossing the Flesh: Scopophilia and the Margins of the Medieval Book," *The Margins of the Text* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 256.
6. Camille, "Glossing the Flesh," 256.
7. Frederick Tupper, *The Riddles of the Exeter Book* (Boston: Ginn and Co., 1910), 20.
8. Monte Cassino, Archivio della Badia, BB. 437, 439, p. 127. Temple, 111, no. 95, dates this manuscript to c. 1050. See her fig. 287–288 for these images. The manuscript is paginated, and as Temple follows this, I will, as well. Maeseyck, Church of Saint Catherine, Trésor, s.n., ff. 6–132, dated to eighth-century Northumbria by J. J. G. Alexander, *A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles: Insular Manuscripts, Sixth to the Ninth Century* (London: Harvey Miller, 1978), 51, no. 23, contains a similar, though much earlier, set.
9. Cohen, 28.
10. Tiberius 81v, Orchard, 192.
11. Friedman, 23–24.

12. Cohen, 134.
13. Kristeva, 4.
14. In Vitellius (103r), Tiberius (f. 82v) and Bodley (42r), the centaurs are referred to as *homo dubii*, but their classical origin, which is, of course, the origin for the entirety of the *Marvels*, remains clear.
15. Tiberius, f. 82.
16. O'Keeffe, 214–215.
17. O'Keeffe, 216.
18. The text is from British Museum Cotton Nero A.i, f. 157r–157v. This manuscript is reproduced by Henry Loyn, ed., *A Wulfstan Manuscript Containing Institutes, Laws, and Homilies, British Museum Cotton Nero A.i.* (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1971). O'Keeffe, 216, cites this text, with minor differences in transcription.
19. O'Keeffe, 217.
20. Friedman, 59–60.
21. Augustine, 56–58.
22. Mary Campbell, 81.
23. Abbo of Fleury's *Life of St. Edmund*, King of East Anglia before 870 comes from the Anglo-Saxon version as it appears in Henry Sweet, *Sweet's Anglo-Saxon Primer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 84.
24. For a discussion of this theme, see Thomas Honegger, "Form and Function: The Beasts of Battle Revisited," *English Studies*, 79:4 (1998). Honegger, 290, provides discussion of Ælfric's eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon *Life of St. Edmund*, which he considers "a Christian variation on the Norse tradition," in that the wolf does not eat the corpse but guards it. See also Cynthia Hahn, *Portrayed on the Heart: Narrative Effect in the Pictorial Lives of Saints from the Tenth through the Thirteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 244–246.
25. Kristeva, 11.
26. Kristeva, 8.
27. Cohen, 6.
28. Gillian Overing and Clare Lees, "Before History, Before Difference: Bodies, Metaphor, and the Church in Anglo-Saxon England," *Yale Journal of Criticism*, 11:2 (1998), 316.
29. Overing and Lees, 316.
30. Gildas, *The Ruin of Britain and Other Works*, ed. and trans. Michael Winterbottom, (London: Phillimore, 1978), 90.
31. Gildas, 90.
32. H. E. J. Cowdrey, "Bede and the 'English People,'" *Journal of Religious History*, 11 (1981), 505.
33. Miller, 250.
34. Kristeva, 6.
35. Friedman, 26.

36. Michael Camille, *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 10.
37. Gildas, 89–90.
38. Miller, 239, quoting George Orwell's *The Road to Wigan Pier*.
39. Kim, "Man-Eating Monsters," 50.
40. Cohen, 4.
41. Nathaniel Gates, *Racial Classification and History: Essays on the Social Construction and Reproduction of "Race,"* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1997), vii.

NOTES TO CHAPTER SEVEN

1. *THEM!*, produced by David Weisbard and directed by Gordon Douglas, 94 min (Warner Brothers, 1954).
2. Friedrich Klaeber, *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Heath, 1950), lines 721–722. This translation, and all others unless specifically cited, are my own.
3. Among the extensive studies on this subject are John Obadiah Westwood, *Fac-similes of the Miniatures & Ornaments of Anglo-Saxon & Irish Manuscripts, Drawn on Stone by W. R. Tymms* (London: B. Quaritch, 1868), Emile Van Moé, *La lettre ornée dans les manuscrits du septième au douzième siècle* (Paris: Du Chêne, 1949), Carl Nordenfalk, *Die Spätantiken Zierbuchstaben* (Stockholm: C. G. Röder, 1970), J.J.G. Alexander, *The Decorated Letter* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978), Hélène Toubert, "La lettre ornée," *Mise en page et mise en texte du livre manuscrit*, ed. Menri-Jean Martin and Roger Chartier (Paris: Promodis, 1982), Francis Wormald, "Decorated Initials in English Manuscripts from A.D. 900 to 1100," in *Collected Writings I* (London: Oxford University Press, 1984) and Christopher De Hamel, *History of Illuminated Manuscripts* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1986). Laura Kendrick provides a thorough historiography of medieval illuminated letters in her *Animating the Letter: The Figurative Embodiment of Writing from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999).
4. Richard Gameson, *The Role of Art in the Late Anglo-Saxon Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 4.
5. Gameson, *The Role of Art*, 213–215; and Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 226.
6. Kendrick, 7.
7. Meyer Schapiro, "On the Aesthetic Attitude in Romanesque Art," in *Selected Papers*, (New York: G. Braziller, 1977), 1, 6.
8. Alexander, *Decorated Letter*, 17.
9. William Henry Stevenson, ed. *Asser's Life of King Alfred* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), 20.

10. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale MS lat. 10861. J. J. G. Alexander, *A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles: Insular Manuscripts, Sixth to the Ninth Century* (London: Harvey Miller, 1978), 85, no. 67, dates this manuscript to the first half of the ninth century. This manuscript seems to have made its way to Beauvais by the twelfth century.
11. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Apologia to William, Abbot of Thiercy*, in *Life in the Middle Ages*, IV, ed. and trans. George G. Coulton. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930), 169.
12. Carl Nordenfalk, *Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Painting* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1977), 17.
13. C.R. Dodwell, *Anglo-Saxon Art: A New Perspective* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 47.
14. Dodwell, 69.
15. Gameson, *The Role of Art*, 232. "Beatus vir," (The blessed man) is the opening of the first Psalm. (*Vulgate*)
16. George Krapp and Elliott Van Kirk Dobbie, eds. *The Exeter Book* (London: George Routledge, 1936), 3.
17. Kendrick, 70. Perhaps this tendency may be connected with a trend observed by Claudia Rapp in "Byzantine Hagiographers as Antiquarians, Seventh to Tenth Centuries," *Bosphorus: Essays in Honor of Cyril Magno*, vol. 21 of *Byzantinische Forschungen*, (Amsterdam: Adolf Hakkert, 1995), 31, where she writes of contemporary Byzantine culture, "the desire to preserve the memory of saints and to promote their cult" resulted from "the melancholy insight that the age of the saints has irrevocably come to a close."
18. Kendrick, 248.
19. Kendrick, 69. As Kendrick observes, this notion is frequently emphasized in the so-called 'author portraits' of the evangelists.
20. Æthelwulf, *De Abbatibus*, ed. A. Campbell (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967), 18–22.
21. Lawrence Nees, "Ultan the Scribe," *The Age of Migrating Ideas: Early Medieval Art in Northern Britain and Ireland*. Edinburgh: National Museums of Scotland, 1993, 104.
22. Æthelwulf, 21.
23. Mildred Budny, "Deciphering the Art of Interlace," *From Ireland Coming: Irish Art from the Early Christian to the Late Gothic Period and its European Context*, ed. Colum Hourihane (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 204.
24. Æthelwulf, 23.
25. Gerald of Wales, *Topographia Hibernica et Expugnatio Hibernica*, in *Opera*, V, ed. James Dimock (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1867), 123. Budny, "Deciphering the Art of Interlace," 196, discusses this passage at length. She translates it as follows: "so delicate and subtle, so exact and skillfully wrought . . . that indeed you would assert that all this was created more through angelic than human diligence."

26. Dodwell, 27.
27. Fred Robinson, *Beowulf and the Appositive Style* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985), 71.
28. Robinson, 71.
29. Ælfric, *Exameron Anglice*, ed. S. J. Crawford (Hamburg: Henri Grand, 1921), 68.
30. Benjamin Thorpe, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle According to the Several Original Authorities* (Wiesbaden: Kraus, 1964), 101.
31. *Vulgate*, Mark, 1:3.
32. The Venerable Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 286.
33. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 27. See Introduction, note 5, for dating. Elżbieta Temple, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: 900–1066* (London: Harvey Miller, 1976), 39, notes “the quality of all-pervading movement and of transmutation of motifs, features which later become typical of twelfth-century Romanesque initials.”
34. Mildred Budny, Abstract for “Balanced Asymmetry as a Hallmark of Ninth-Century Anglo-Saxon Art,” *Old English Newsletter*, 35:3 (Spring 2002), A9, discusses the various images which seem “haphazard or wayward to modern eyes,” arguing briefly in this abstract that such works may in fact contain “a carefully balanced asymmetry.” (Original emphasis.)
35. See also Cambridge, Corpus Christi MS 183, for a similar, if somewhat tamer, series of images. Temple, 38, no. 6, dates this copy of Bede’s *Lives of Saint Cuthbert* to c. 937, at Winchester. This precise dating results from the conclusion that this manuscript is the same that was presented by Æthelstan to Cuthbert, as shown in its frontispiece, in or around 937. Temple cites this full-page, framed image as “the earliest presentation picture in English art.” Mildred Budny, *Insular, Anglo-Saxon and Early Anglo-Norman Manuscript Art at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge: An Illustrated Catalogue* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1997), 161, no. 12, concurs on the date.
36. Cambridge, University Library MS Ff. I. 23. Temple, 97, no. 80, dates the manuscript to ca. 1030–1050, and places it at Winchcombe Abbey, Gloucestershire.
37. In this instance, the lamb might be seen as a commentary illustration, since David the shepherd is the author of this song about God. Nevertheless, I am more inclined to view this image within the context of the other images in this manuscript rather than in relation to the particular psalm which it accompanies. This initial is for Psalm 37 of the *Vulgate*, which is a plea for mercy and a lamentation of pains suffered, and so the Lamb is appropriate, but it would serve just as well for dozens of the Psalms.
38. David Williams, *Deformed Discourse: The Function of the Monster in Mediaeval Thought and Literature* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1996), 216.

39. Alexander, *Decorated Letter*, 18.
40. Gertrude Schiller, *Iconography of Christian Art*, I, trans. Janet Seligman (Greenwich: New York Graphic Society, 1971), 108–109.
41. This translation is based on the text as reconstructed by David Howlett in “Inscriptions and Design of the Ruthwell Cross.” *The Ruthwell Cross: Papers from the Colloquium Sponsored by the Index of Christian Art*. ed. Brendan Cassidy (Princeton: Princeton Department of Art and Archeology, 1992), 75.
42. Gildas, *The Ruin of Britain and Other Works*, ed and trans. Michael Winterbottom (London: Phillimore, 1978), 92.
43. Gildas, 92.
44. Gildas, 96.
45. Gildas, 111.
46. Gildas, 122.
47. James Tschen-Emmons, “The Limits of Late Antiquity: The Life of Áed ma Bricc and the Irish Literati in Late Antiquity,” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 2002), 101.
48. Hrafnhildur Bodvarsdottir, “The Function of the Beasts of Battle in Old English Poetry” (Ph.D. diss., SUNY Stonybrook, 1976), 43. See also Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. Monika Vizedom and Gabrielle Caffee (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 17–18.
49. Andy Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Beowulf-Manuscript* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1995), 37.
50. Stephen Pollington, *Leechcraft: Early English Charms, Plant Lore, and Healing* (Norfolk: Anglo-Saxon Books, 2000), 459.
51. Elliott Van Kirk Dobbie, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems* (London: George Routledge, 1942), 56.
52. Bodvarsdottir, 42.
53. *Beowulf*, lines 102–104.
54. *Fifelcynn* translates as “sea-monster-race,” for Joseph Bosworth and T. Northcote Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary, Based on the Manuscript Collections of the Late Joseph Bosworth* (Oxford: The Clarendon press, 1882), 286; George Jack, ed., *Beowulf: A Student Edition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 34, and J.R. Clark Hall, *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 118 agree.
55. Orchard, 59. These terms translate roughly to “boundary, moors, fen, stronghold and dwelling of the race of sea-monsters.”
56. For discussion, see Debra Hassig, “The Iconography of Rejection: Jews and Other Monstrous Races,” *Image and Belief: Studies in Celebration of the Eightieth Anniversary of the Index of Christian Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 25–37.
57. *Beowulf*, lines 847–852. My emphasis.
58. *Beowulf*, line 851. These definitions are all provided by Hill, 140.

59. Hill, 114; and Jack, 77.
60. *Beowulf*, lines 521–523.
61. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters, and the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 34.
62. Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, "Beowulf, Lines 702B-836: Transformations and the Limits of the Human," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 23:4 (1981), 487.
63. O'Keeffe, 487–488. Orchard, 31–32, likewise acknowledges the poet's empathetic description of Grendel as a man.
64. Orchard, 34.
65. *THEM!*, produced by David Weisbard and directed by Gordon Douglas, 94 min (Warner Brothers, 1954).
66. *Beowulf*, line 1353. .
67. *Beowulf*, lines 1586–1594.
68. Orchard, 39. Richard Morris, *The Blickling Homilies of the Tenth Century* (London: Early English Text Society, 1880), vi–vii, points out connection between Grendel's mere and the description of St Paul's vision on Hell in the *Blickling Homilies*. This passage refers to Homily XVII, although Morris cites it as XVI.
69. Craig Williamson, *A Feast of Creatures: Anglo-Saxon Riddle-Songs* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), 4.
70. Williamson, 33, note 55.
71. See Karen Jolly, *Popular Religion in Late Saxon England: Elf Charms in Context* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 87, Pollington, 498, and Cnut's Second Law Code, in A. J. Robinson, ed. and trans., *The Laws of the Kings of England, from Edmund to Henry I, Part I: Edmund to Canute* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1925), 176.
72. Kendrick, 4.
73. Lucan, *Pharsalia*, trans. and intro. Jane Wilson Joyce (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), xviii.
74. Cambridge, Trinity College MS R. 3. 30. See C. M. Kauffmann, *A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles: Romanesque Manuscripts: 1066–1190* (London: Harvey Miller, 1975), 64–65, no.24. Kauffmann, dates the manuscript to ca. 1120 and locates its production to Rochester Cathedral Priory, based on the unusual use of letters for the ordering of the quires, "a practice common in Rochester but unknown in Canterbury manuscripts."
75. Lucan, *The Civil War (Pharsalia)*, ed. and trans. J. D. Duff (London: William Heinmann, 1969), 2.
76. Oxford, Bodleian MSS Auct. E. inf. 1. See Kauffmann, 107–108, no. 82, who places the manuscript's origin at Winchester in the mid-twelfth century. He bases this assertion on its similarity to Oxford, Bodleian MSS Auct. D. 2. 4 which has a known origin.

77. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Hybrids, Monsters, Borderlands: The Bodies of Gerald of Wales," *The Postcolonial Middle Ages*, (2000), 85.
78. Lucan, *The Civil War*, 174.
79. London, British Library, Royal 1.B. xi. See Kauffmann, 93, no. 65. He dates the manuscript to ca. 1140–1150, and locates its production at St. Augustine's, Canterbury.
80. For discussion of these Types, see Francis Wormald, "Decorated Initials in English Manuscripts from A.D. 900 to 1100," in *Collected Writings I* (London: Oxford University Press, 1984), 48–50.
81. Williams, 79.

NOTES TO CHAPTER EIGHT

- 1 Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Orders of Nature 1150–1750* (New York: Zone Books, 1998), 34.
2. Jonathan J. G. Alexander, *The Decorated Letter* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978), 16.
3. Michael Uebel, "Unthinking the Monster: Twelfth-Century Responses to Saracen Alterity," *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 268.
4. See William Ian Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 41.
5. Audrey Meaney, *Anglo-Saxon Amulets and Curing Stones* (Oxford: BAR, 1981), 174.
6. Roy Porter, "History of the Body," *New Perspectives on Historical Writing* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1991), 214.
7. Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, "Beowulf, Lines 702B-836: Transformations and the Limits of the Human," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 23:4 (1981), 491.
8. *Beowulf*, lines 902–904.
9. For example, Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, II, trans. Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer (Boston: Kluwer, 1989), 36, writes, "material things are divisible parallel to the extension belonging to their essence. Men and animals are not divisible. Men and animals are spatially localized."
10. Stephen Pollington, *Leechcraft: Early English Charms, Plant Lore, and Healing* (Norfolk: Anglo-Saxon Books, 2000), 187.
11. *Ibid.*, *Leechcraft*, 464.
12. *Ibid.*, *Leechcraft*, 224, 402. Pollington, 225, n. 71, notes that the context implies that the horse has been elfshot. For the lengthy passage on *alfsogopa* (elf-hiccups), see 402.
13. *Ibid.*, *Leechcraft*, 458.
14. *Ibid.*, *Leechcraft*, 459.

15. Ibid., *Leechcraft*, 457.
16. Temple, 81, no. 64 dates this manuscript to the early eleventh century at Christ Church, Canterbury. Koert van der Horst, William Noel and Wilhelmmina Wüstefeld, *The Utrecht Psalter in Medieval Art: Picturing the Psalms of David* (Tuurdijk, Netherlands: HES Publishers, 1996), 124, discuss the derivation of the Eadwine Psalter from the Utrecht Psalter, and note some significant differences. See 156 for an alternate reading of these images.
17. Pollington, *Leechcraft*, 229.
18. Ibid., *Leechcraft*, 456.
19. Ibid., *Leechcraft*, 193.
20. Ibid., *Leechcraft*, 193.
21. Ibid., *Leechcraft*, 192. Pollington notes that *alfsidene* may have been “the terrifying ‘nightmare’ but is possibly a nocturnal, sexual fantasy similar to the incubus and succubus of classical pagan thought.” (193, n. 18) J. R. Clark Hill, ed., *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 8, renders *alfsidene* as “elvish influence” or “nightmare.”
22. Pollington, *Leechcraft*, 477.
23. Ibid., *Leechcraft*, 477.
24. James Elkins, *Pictures of the Body: Pain and Metamorphosis* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 109. The term *bengeat* seems to be a *hapax legomenon*, not a routine part of the Anglo-Saxon vocabulary, but is a resonant metaphor, resulting from the kenning common to Old English poetry.
25. David Porter, ed., *Excerptiones de Prisciano: The Source for Aelfric's Latin-Old English Grammar* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2002), 414.
26. Cambridge, Trinity College MS O. 2. 51. See C. M. Kauffmann, *A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles: Romanesque Manuscripts: 1066–1190* (London: Harvey Miller, 1975), 56, no. 8. The *Grammar* is bound with an undecorated tenth-century Prudentius manuscript. Kauffmann dates the manuscript to ca. 1070–1100 and establishes its origin at St. Augustine's, Canterbury.
27. Pollington, *Excerptiones de Prisciano*, 1–2, 9.
28. David Porter, *Excerptiones de Prisciano*, 9.
29. Richard Gameson, *The Role of Art in the Late Anglo-Saxon Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 62.
30. Priscian, *Institutiones grammaticarum*, in *Grammatici Latini*, II–III, ed. Henrich Keil (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1855–59), 4–6.
31. David Porter, *Excerptiones de Prisciano*, 10.
32. Priscian, *Institutiones grammaticarum*, 5 and Vergil, *Aeneidos Liber Primus*, ed. R. G. Austin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 1.
33. See, for example, Michael Camille, *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 10.
34. Priscian, *Institutiones grammaticarum*, 44.

35. Cambridge, Trinity College MS O. 2. 51, f. 16r.
36. See also the veiled female figures in Prudentius' *Psychomachia* (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 23), Elzbieta Temple, *A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles: Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts 900–1066* (London: Harvey Miller, 1976), 69, no. 48, fig. 155–158. This historiated initial may be an early precursor to the famous personification of Grammar in the archivolt over the right portal on the west facade at Chartres.
37. Priscian, *Institutiones grammaticarum*, 141.
38. Cambridge, Trinity College MS O. 2. 51, f. 46r.
39. Priscian, *Institutiones grammaticarum*, 369.
40. Priscian, *Institutiones grammaticarum*, 494.
41. Is it possible that this is an early manifestation of the 'green man,' an embodiment of the forces of nature, working to help the foliage-producing dragon?
42. Cambridge, Trinity College MS O. 2. 51, f. 111v.
43. Daston and Park, *Wonders and the Orders of Nature*, 20.
44. Laura Kendrick, *Animating the Letter: The Figurative Embodiment of Writing from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999), 133.
45. David Porter, *Excerptiones de Prisciano*, 11.
46. Peter Damian, *Epistulae* (XXII–XL), ed. K. Reindel (Rome: Città Nuova, 2000), 166.
47. Cambridge, Trinity R. 3.30, f. 54r. For more on the implications of homoerotic imagery in the Early Middle Ages, see John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 169–206.
48. This hand appears to be fourteenth-century English cursive.
49. *Alien*, produced by Gordon Carroll, David Giler and Walter Hill and directed by Ridley Scott, 117 min (20th Century Fox, 1979).
50. Pollington, *Excerptiones de Prisciano*, 461, and *Beowulf*, line 432.
51. Roy Porter, "History of the Body," 213.
52. Drew Leder, "Flesh and Blood: A Proposed Supplement to Merleau-Ponty," *The Body: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, ed. Donn Welton (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 203.
53. Camille, *Image on the Edge*, 18–20.
54. For a discussion of the continuity of space between frame and image in Anglo-Saxon art, see Gameson, *The Role of Art*, 152–157.
55. Christopher De Hamel, *History of Illuminated Manuscripts* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1986), 21.
56. Kendrick, *Animating the Letter*, 30–31.
57. Robert Kark Harris, "The Marginal Drawings of the Bury St. Edmunds Psalter (Rome Vatican Library MS Reg. Lat. 12) with Figures," (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1960), 4–5.

58. Michelle Brown, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 58.
59. *Ibid.*, 58; and Alexander, *Decorated Letter*, 9. Alexander argues that Insular illuminators were the first to combine image and letter, since they did not believe that illustration needed “spatially convincing illusionism.”
60. Ritchie Girvan, *Beowulf and the Seventh Century* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1971), 4.
61. Benedict, *The Rule of Saint Benedict*, ed. Justin McCann (Westminster: The Newman Press, 1963), 6.
62. Peter Damian, *Epistulae (I-XXI)*, ed. K. di G. I. Gargano and N. D’Acunto (Rome: Città Nuova Editrice, 2000), 282, Epistula X. Damian is here quoting Ephesians 6:17.
63. For a discussion of the role of the trope of the *miles Christi* or *metodes cempa* in Anglo-Saxon literature, see Stephen Morrison, “Old English *cempa* in Cynewulf’s *Juliana* and the Figure of the *Miles Christi*,” *English Language Notes*, 17:2 (1979), 81–84. Claud Schneider, “Cynewulf’s Devaluation of Heroic Tradition in *Juliana*,” *Anglo-Saxon England*, 7 (1978), 117, also discusses this usage, contained in a speech of the Devil. Morrison, at odds with Schneider, also cites the usage of *metodes cempa* in *Juliana* and *Cristes cempa* in the Old English *Life of Saint Guthlac*.
64. Morrison, “Old English *cempa*,” 82.
65. George Brown, “The Dynamics of Literacy in Anglo-Saxon England,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 77:1 (1995), 112.

NOTES TO CHAPTER NINE

1. Robinson, 15.
2. Robinson, 55.
3. Robinson, 174.
4. Orchard, 72. (Orchard’s translation.)
5. Brønislav Geremek, “The Marginal Man,” *The Medieval World*, ed. Jacques Le Goff trans. Lydia Cochrane (London: Parkgate Books, 1997), 350.
6. Bodvarsdottir, 48, and Krapp and Dobbie, *The Exeter Book*, 162. This passage is from *Maxims I*, lines 172–173.
7. Orchard, 61.
8. *Beowulf*, line 107. Also, C. W. Jones, ed., *Bedae Venerabilis Libri Quatuor in Genesim*, CCSL 119A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1967), 78–9.
9. Bodvarsdottir, 39. Bodvarsdottir provides an excellent discussion of the figure of the wolf in Old English poetry noting, among other uses, that “a criminal or outlaw was called *wulf-beafod* “wolf-head” in both Welsh and Old English laws.” See also F. Liebermann, ed. and trans., *Die Gesetz der Angelsachen*, I. (Halle: Scientia Aalen, 1903–1916), 631, and Dorothy Whitelock, *The Beginnings of English Society*, *Pelican History of England*, II

(Baltimore: Penguin 1968), 140, and “*Wulfheafodtreo*” in Riddle 55, of the Exeter Book, (Krapp and Dobbie, *The Exeter Book*). Orchard, 75, draws our attention to instances in which Grendel and his mother are compared to wolves. See lines 1267, 1518, 1506, 1599, 1358, where they are described as *heorowearh*, *grundwyrgen*, and *brimwylf*, and there home is rendered as *wulfhleopu*.

10. Michael Goodich, ed., *Other Middle Ages: Witnesses at the Margins of Medieval Society* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 11–12.
11. Eric John, *Reassessing Anglo-Saxon England* (Manchester University Press: New York, 1996), 115.
12. John, 46.
13. Campbell, et al., 82.
14. Osbern, “*Vita Sancti Dunstani*,” *Memorials of Saint Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. William Stubbs (London: Longman and Co., 1874), xxxvii. This manuscript is Bibliothèque Municipale d’Arras MS. 1092, and contains the anonymous *Sancti Dunstani Vita Auctore B*.
15. Auctore B, “*Vita Sancti Dunstani*,” *Memorials of Saint Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. William Stubbs (London: Longman and Co., 1874), 12–13.
16. The wording is at times almost identical, and both were, according to Stubbs, lvi, most likely produced at Canterbury, as were the *Lives* by Eadmere and William of Malmesbury. Indeed, as Stubbs, xxix–xl, notes, the London, British Library, Cotton MS. Cleopatra A.xiii manuscript of the Auctore B text was in the possession of Canterbury when the earliest surviving copy of Osbern’s life, London, British Library, Arundel 16, was produced.
17. Osbern, “*Vita Sancti Dunstani*,” 81.
18. London, British Library, Arundel 16. Kauffmann, 56, no. 7, dates this manuscript to c. 1090, Canterbury, Christ Church. For an excellent discussion of this manuscript, see Mildred Budny and Timothy Graham, “Dunstan as Hagiographical Subject or Osbern as Author? The Scribal Portrait in an Early Copy of Osbern’s *Vita Sancti Dunstani*,” *Gesta*, 32:2 (1993).
19. Daniel Thompson, *The Materials and Techniques of Medieval Painting* (New York: Dover Publications, 1956), 165. Thompson, 165, informs us that “verdigris was enormously used by scribes and illuminators of books” even though they knew of its corrosive nature.
20. Images of horned helmets do survive in an Anglo-Saxon context. The Sutton Hoo helmet is decorated with die-stamped plaques, four of which contain images of figures wearing horned helmets similar to this figure. For an image, see Campbell, et al., 69 and Rupert Bruce-Mitford, *Arms, Armour and Regalia*, in *The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial*, II (London: British Museum Publications, 1983). 206–209, 217.

21. Stubbs, ix.
22. Stubbs, lxii.
23. See above, 64–65.
24. Stubbs, 69.
25. Budny and Graham, 85.
26. Budny and Graham, 87: “Although inscribed OSBEARNUS, the image has hitherto been identified not as an author portrait but as a portrait of St. Dunstan, the subject of the text.” However, Budny and Graham argue persuasively for the more logical identification of the figure as Osbern.
27. Stubbs, 71. The familiar notion of the lion as ‘king of the beasts’ was popularized in the Middle Ages in bestiaries, but can be traced through Isidore’s *Etymologies* to classical sources.
28. Budny and Graham, 92–94.
29. *Beowulf*, line 496.
30. *Beowulf*, line 1.
31. Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture*, trans. Catharine Misrahi (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982), 73.
32. Budny and Graham, 91. Budny and Graham provide a full list of citations for all monsters and devils in this text.
33. Budny and Graham, 93–94.
34. Apuleius, *The Golden Ass; being the Metamorphoses of Lucius Apuleius*, ed. and trans. W. Adlington (London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1958).
35. Budny and Graham, 94.
36. Budny and Graham, 90.
37. Budny and Graham, 91, 94.
38. Pollington, 400. This manuscript, London, British Library Royal 12.D. xvii, is dated to ca. 950, and was, according to Pollington, 71, “apparently written at the Winchester scriptorium founded by Alfred.”
39. For discussion of *alfsidene*, see above, 178.
40. Auctore B, “Vita Sancti Dunstani,” 12–13.
41. Alexander, *Decorated Letter*, 9.
42. Alexander, *Decorated Letter*, 10.
43. Cohen, *Of Giants*, 1.
44. Alcuin, *De rhetorica et virtutibus*, in *Patrologia Latina* 101:942–45.
45. Nordenfalk, *Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Painting*, 17.
46. Nordenfalk, *Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Painting*, 17.
47. Françoise Henry, *The Book of Kells: Reproductions of the Manuscript in Trinity College, Dublin* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976), vi. The figure of Matthew appears a number of times throughout his Gospel, and each time exhibits slightly different features and characteristics, although generally he is shown frontally, with blond, curling hair and a beard, as shown in this image.

48. Bede, *The MSS Tanner Bede: The Old English Version of Bede's Historia Ecclesiastica*, Oxford, Bodleian Library MSS Tanner 10, ed. Janet Bately (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1992). According to Bately, 7, MSS Tanner 10 is the oldest surviving Old English manuscript of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*. It may have been produced in Winchester. See Temple, 40, no. 9, who dates the manuscript to the first half of the tenth century.
49. See Oxford, Bodleian Library MSS Tanner 10, folios 54r, 93r, 115v and 127r.
50. Kendrick, 16.
51. Elkins, 1.
52. Bede, *De Tempore Salomonis Liber* in *Patrologia Latina*, 91:790C.
53. Kendrick, 41–42.
54. Budny, *Insular, Anglo-Saxon and Early Anglo-Norman Manuscript Art*, 507, no. 32, dates this manuscript to the first half of the eleventh century, probably from Southern England. Temple, 99, no. 81, also dates this manuscript to the first half of the eleventh century, and notes “a remarkable diversity of motifs” in the images. Gneuss 31, no. 39, agrees on the provenance.
55. Mildred Budny, *Insular, Anglo-Saxon, and Early Anglo-Norman Manuscript Art at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge: An Illustrated Catalogue*. (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1997).
56. Budny, *Insular, Anglo-Saxon and Early Anglo-Norman Manuscript Art*, 508, links the style of some of the initials in this manuscript to those in the Winchcombe Psalter, discussed above.
57. Evelyn Edson, *Mapping Time and Space: How Medieval Mapmakers Viewed Their World* (London: British Library, 1997), 5.
58. Kendrick, 79–81.
59. This manuscript is paginated, not foliated. The pagination has been followed by Budny in her catalogue, and will be followed here.
60. Cambridge, Corpus Christi MS 41, p. 410. For a transcription and translation of this text, see Bede, *The Old English Version of Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. and trans. Thomas Miller (London: Oxford University Press), 1891, 422.
61. Budny, *Insular, Anglo-Saxon and Early Anglo-Norman Manuscript Art*, 522.
62. These are not visible in reproduction, but they have also been noted and described by Budny in her catalogue, 522.
63. Budny, *Insular, Anglo-Saxon and Early Anglo-Norman Manuscript Art*, 522.
64. My discussion of the pagan-Christian interactions on the Ruthwell Cross is given in “Crossing the Boundary: Apotropaism in the Ruthwell Cross” (unpublished paper presented at the 36th International Congress on Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo, May 2002.).
65. Caroline Walker Bynum, “Why All the Fuss about the Body? A Medievalist's Perspective,” *Critical Inquiry*, 22 (1995), 1
66. Bynum, 23.

67. Around the turn of the eleventh-century, Ælfric served as a ghost writer for Bishop Wulfsgie and later for Archbishop Wulfstan. See Joyce Hill, "Monastic Reform and the Secular Church: Ælfric's Pastoral Letters in Context," *England in the Eleventh Century: Proceedings of the 1990 Harlaxton Symposium* (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1992), 104, argues that both bishops used Ælfric because, among other reasons, he saw textual "orthodoxy . . . and accuracy . . . as the hallmarks of the reform."
68. Eusebius was bishop of Caesarea in the fourth century. As Robert Calkins, *Illuminated Books of the Middle Ages* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1983), 18, writes, he compiled "a concordance of similar passages in the four Gospels in tabular form. The prefacing of the text of the Gospels with these canon tables, as they are called, soon became a common practice, and was adopted by St. Jerome in his revision of the Latin Gospels."
69. Calkins, 162. The Sacramentary was perfected throughout the ninth century.
70. In addition to their strong visual similarities, both manuscripts have been dated to between 1120 and 1150, with one attributed to Canterbury and the other to Rochester. This is not surprising, given the close ties between these two monasteries. As Kauffmann, 65, writes, the "relationship between the two houses had been close ever since Benedictine monks were established at Rochester in about 1080. Their privileges were modeled on those of Canterbury, and under a special agreement the Archbishop of Canterbury looked after the see of Rochester when there was no bishop, while the bishop of Rochester has similar responsibilities for Canterbury. It is therefore not surprising that the decoration of Rochester manuscripts is dependent on that of Canterbury." Richard Gameson, *The Manuscripts of Early Norman England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 16–17, provides some discussion of the interrelations of Canterbury and Rochester.
71. Jerome, *Liber Hebraicarum Quaestionum in Genesim*, in *Patrologia Latina* 23, *Opera Omnia S. Eusebii Hieronymi Stridonensis Presbyteri*, 936A.
72. Budny and Graham, 91.
73. Kendrick, 9, 23–24.
74. Seth Lerer, *Literacy and Power in Anglo-Saxon Literature* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 19.
75. Camille, "Glossing the Flesh," 246.
76. O'Keeffe, 486–488. See also *Beowulf*, lines 650–750.
77. Michel Feher, "Introduction," *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, 1, ed. Michel Feher (New York: Zone, 1989), 13.
78. Donn Welton, "Soft, Smooth Hands: Husserl's Phenomenology of the Lived-Body," *The Body: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, ed. Donn Welton (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 50.
79. Miller, xvi.
80. Kendrick, 82 and *Vulgate*, John 15:1: "Ego sum vitis vera."

NOTES TO THE CONCLUSION

1. Rebecca Barnhouse and Benjamin Withers, "Introduction: Aspects and Approaches," *The Old English Hexateuch: Aspects and Approaches* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000), 1. See Chapter 4, note 7 for dating and provenance of the *Hexateuch*.
2. Genesis 6:14–16.
3. Karin Olsen, "Animated Ships in Old English and Old Norse Poetry," *Mediaevalia Groningana, XX: Animals and the Symbolic in Medieval Art & Literature* (1997), 53–54, 60. Olsen cites Rudolf Meissner, *Die Kenningar der Skalden* (Bonn: Kurt Schroeder, 1921; repr. Hildesheim, 1984), 208–20, who notes almost 260 sea-horse compounds for "ship" in Old Norse poetry and twenty-one sea-steed and sea-horse compounds in Old English poetry.
4. Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), I:15, 50.
5. Ruth Mellinkoff, "Serpent Imagery in the Illustrated Old English Hexateuch," *Modes of Interpretation in Old English Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 51 and C. R. Dodwell and Peter Clemoes, *The Old English Illustrated Hexateuch (London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius B.iv.)* (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1974), p. 71.
6. Anne-Marie Flambard Héricher, "Archaeology and the Bayeux Tapestry," *The Bayeux Tapestry: Embroidering the Facts of History*, ed. Pierre Bouet, Brian Levy and François Neveux (Caen: Presses Universitaires de Caen, 2004), 279–280.
7. C. R. Dodwell and Peter Clemoes, *The Old English Illustrated Hexateuch (London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius B.iv.)* (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1974), 71.
8. Olsen, 59–60.
9. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 614, f. 32r.
10. Dodwell, 71.
11. Sarah Kay and Miri Rubin, "Introduction," *Framing Medieval Bodies* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1994), 1.
12. Jonah 2:1. The duration of the flood is somewhat ambiguous, but comparisons between Noah's age upon entering the ark in Genesis 7:11 and opening the ark to see dry land in Genesis 8:13 suggests almost a full year has past.
13. Friedrich Klaeber, *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Heath, 1950), line 851 and Charles Wycliffe Goodwin, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Version of the Life of Saint Guthlac, Hermit of Crowland* (London: John Russell Smith, 1848), 21–22.
14. Nennius, *British History and the Welsh Annals*, ed. John Morris (London: Phillimore, 1980), 60.

15. Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, I: 15, 50 and Gildas, *The Ruin of Britain and Other Works*, ed. Michael Winterbottom (London: Phillimore, 1978), 97.
16. Nennius, 63.
17. Piero Camporesi, *The Incorruptible Flesh: Bodily Mutilation and Mortification in Religion and Folklore*, trans. Tania Croft-Murray (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 79.
18. See folios 2v, 3v and 5, among others.
19. Samantha Riches, "Encountering the Monstrous: Saints and Dragons in Medieval Thought," *The Monstrous Middle Ages*, ed. Bettina Bildhauer and Robert Mills (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 197, writes: "There is some evidence that [monsters] have been understood to be literal physical animals, with real power to devastate lands and populations, but it is equally evident that they often operated as metaphors of pre-Christian and heterodox belief, symbolized lust or other forms of sinfulness, functioned as representatives of generalized evil and also acted as a useful foil to ideas of human civilization."
20. Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, VII (London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1965), 56–58. See also Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters, and the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), xiv.
21. Martin Carver, *Sutton Hoo: Burial Ground of Kings?* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 123.

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Figure 2.1. Hereford World Map. (By permission of the Dean and Chapter of Hereford and the Hereford Mappa Mundi Trust.)



Figure 5.3. London, British Library, B.v Tiberius B.v, f. 82r, Blemmye, *Marvels of the East*. (By permission of the British Library.)







Figure 9.2. London, British Library, Arundel 16, f. 2, Author Portrait with Censing Acolyte and Beasts, Osbern's *Life of Saint Dunstan*. (By permission of the British Library.)

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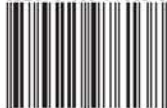
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